

KIRKMAN • WALKER • CRABTREE

INVINCIBLE



VOLUME ONE

FAMILY MATTERS

Introduction by Kurt Busiek



image COMICS PRESENTS

INVINCIBLE

TM

FAMILY MATTERS



CREATED BY
**ROBERT KIRKMAN
& CORY WALKER**

image

Writer, Letterer

Robert
Kirkman

Penciler, Inker

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THE EVIL THAT IS ROBERT KIRKMAN

Run. Run, and whatever you do, don't look back.

-- Erik Larsen

Listen to me. For the love of God, listen to me. Don't try to understand it. Just go. And go quickly.

-- Eric Stephenson

It's too late -- too late for us. Leave us -- just save yourself.

-- Jim Valentino

If only I'd listened.

Understand something. I don't know Robert Kirkman. I've never met Robert Kirkman, at least not that I'm aware of. He could be six foot two, with a full head of wavy blond hair, a cleft in his chin and the build of a champion surfer. But that's not how I think of him. I think of him as about four foot eight and hydrocephalic, with a head like a pumpkin. Lank thin hair, beady little eyes, and a shriveled body that you'd barely think could hold that enormous head up. And his voice. One of those voices like nails on a blackboard, that suddenly shrills out behind you when you were thinking of something else, and you're halfway to the ceiling, nerves on fire, before you even realize what you've heard.

If only I'd listened.

*

But no, here I am.

Like the vast majority of smart-thinking Americans, I passed up Invincible #1 at least twice. Heard about the new Image "superhero line," saw the books in the catalog, and breezed right by Invincible. Just another superhero book, I thought. I've got a complete run of Nova. Of Firestorm. Of Speedball, for Pete's sake. This isn't anything I need. Firebreather, that's what I went for. Firebreather and Dominion.

Smart man.

And then the books came out, and there I was in the comics shop, and there was Invincible, and I passed it up again. Didn't even pick it up and flip through it. Just another superhero cover, nothing special, don't bother.

Ah, for the days of freedom. Were they really only months ago?

*

So here I am, writing introductions, suggesting cover copy, even coming up with cover concepts (like the one for the cover to the volume you currently hold in your hot little imperiled hands). And all for free. All for that

pumpkin-headed freak with the chalkboard voice, who cackles – I just know it, I know he cackles – as I slave away for his benefit.

I'm an Eisner Award-winning writer, for the love of heaven. A Harvey Award-winner! Multiple times over! I have interview requests to disdain, characters to abuse, fan hopes to dash. I have artists to torment, editors who still cling to faint hopes of getting me to do something on time! I'm a busy man!

And yet here I am, working for Kirkman when I could be getting Astro City out monthly. When Avengers/JLA could already be out. When I could be reading classic Little Lulu issues to my daughters. But no.

Kirkman. Goddamn Kirkman.

*

I ignored the warning signs. I saw people talking about Invincible on Erik Larsen's message board, but I missed that hysterical, compulsive undertone. I saw someone point out that the entire first issue was available to be read for free at the Image website. I figured what the hell, it's free, right?

Nothing's free. I should have listened to Larsen.

I went over to the Image site and I read it. Went back to the Larsen site to comment. Mostly just to rag on that first cover, which I thought was a big mistake, if you must know. And now look at me.

*

The thing is – and this is the dark secret they don't want you to know until it's too late – Kirkman's good. Really good.

Invincible is fun, fresh, energetic. It's not one of those superhero books that doesn't want to admit to liking superheroes, so it tries to put a different spin on it and winds up being an uncomfortable mélange of nothing. No, Invincible embraces its genre. It's a superhero book that loves being a superhero book, one that isn't out to deconstruct or expose or undermine or scathingly satirize. It just wants to be a good superhero book. And yet, it still manages to put a different spin on things, and winds up being distinctive and clever and alive, all the while standing foursquare at the heart of a longstanding, well-worked genre that many would say has nothing more to offer.

If only.

I think my favorite character is Mark's mom. Her casual acceptance of her family life, her tension when her "boys" are out of touch even by the reach of CNN, her matter-of-factness about the fantastic, that's the glue that makes this book work. I want to see an annual, Invincible's Mom, Debbie Grayson. It's that aspect – not contrast, but melding – of Mark's two worlds that makes Invincible so compelling.

It'd be okay if that was all there was to it. A new good comic? Fine, bring it on.

But Kirkman is relentless. Invincible led me to Tech Jacket. To the

Superpatriot series he and Cory Walker did. To Battle Pope. And now there's Brit coming up. And Capes. And Masters of the Universe.

Masters of the Universe, for cryin' out loud!

And then there are the artists. Cory Walker is the one we're concerned about here, and his clean, clear storytelling, his deadpan characterization, his sleek designs, his distinctive, stylized rendering ... it all brings the book to life in a way that'll make you feel you know these people. That you could sit down and have a conversation with them, at least while you weren't surreptitiously checking out Atom Eve's butt.

But there's E.J. Su on Tech Jacket. Tony Moore on Battle Pope and Brit. And they're all good. All distinctive, clear, solid, compelling. Where does he find these guys?

It's not natural, I tell you.

*

So here you are. You may still have a choice. Maybe you're someone who's already been reading Invincible, and those proliferating other books. If so, never mind. You're as gone as I am, one of the chattering wrecks on the message board, unable resist trying to pass on your addiction, share it with the unwary. But maybe you just heard the buzz, or picked this up in the store because of that cool cover concept, or something. If so, then there's still time.

You're standing on the precipice, like I was. You can put this back on the shelf, back away slowly, and get on with your life. Or if you've already purchased the book, but you're just reading the intro before you get into the stories, well ... you probably have a furnace, don't you?

Because otherwise, you'll take that step. You'll take it, and there'll be no turning back. You'll get swept up into Kirkman's world, one more helpless victim unable to break free, hopelessly drawn to each new release, to each new character, caught on tenterhooks between episodes, as you wait to see what'll happen next. Just one more Funk-O-Drone. You'll be recommending the book to friends, spreading the word online. You might even end up working for that hellish fiend for free.

He'll have you, then. And Kirkman doesn't let go.

*

KURT BUSIEK has enough awards plaques to tile his bathroom, and enough damn statuettes to play chess on the result. He writes, in theory, for Marvel, DC, Wildstorm, Dark Horse and more. In fact, he should be doing paying work right now.

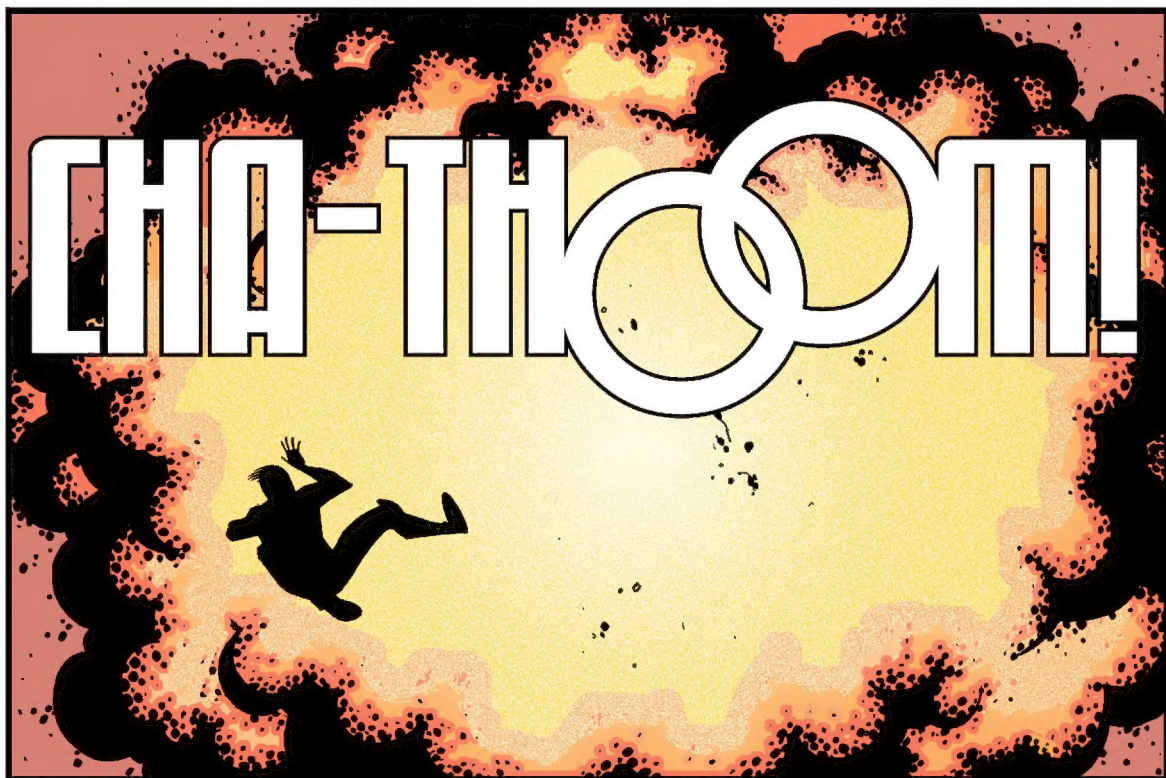
Think of the children, won't you? The children.

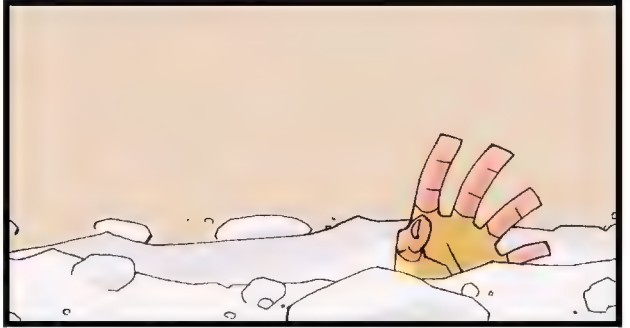
CHAPTER ONE

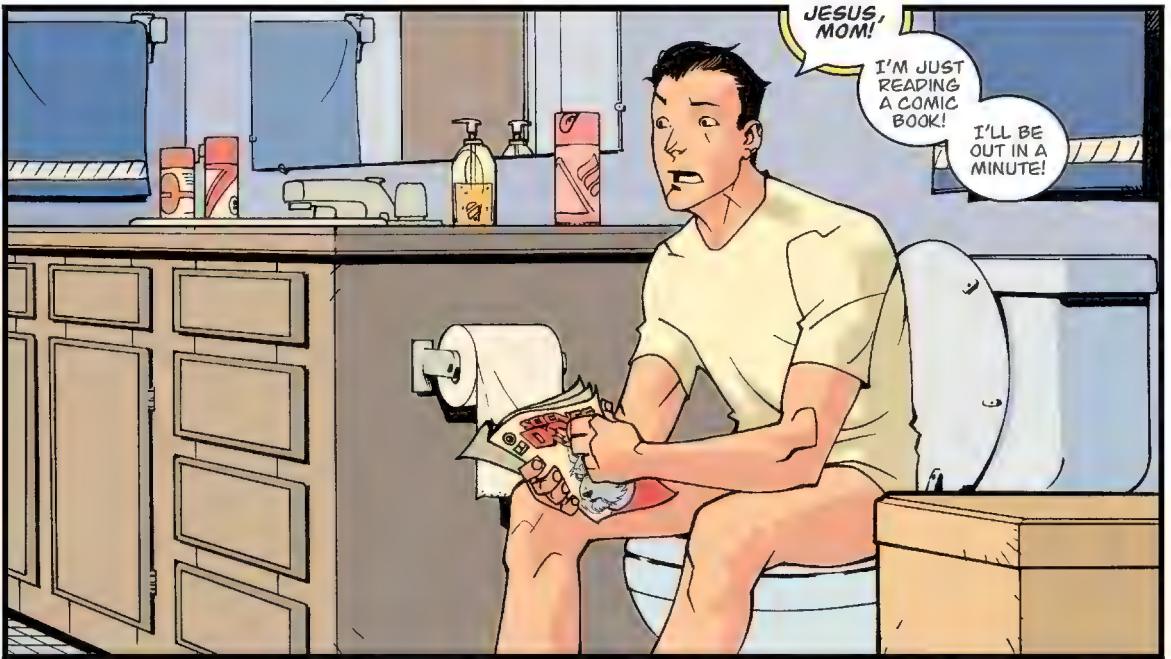
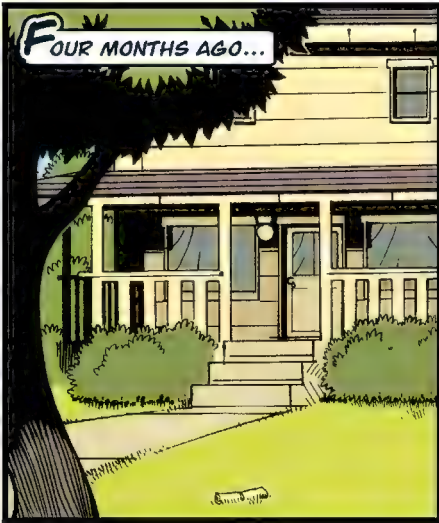


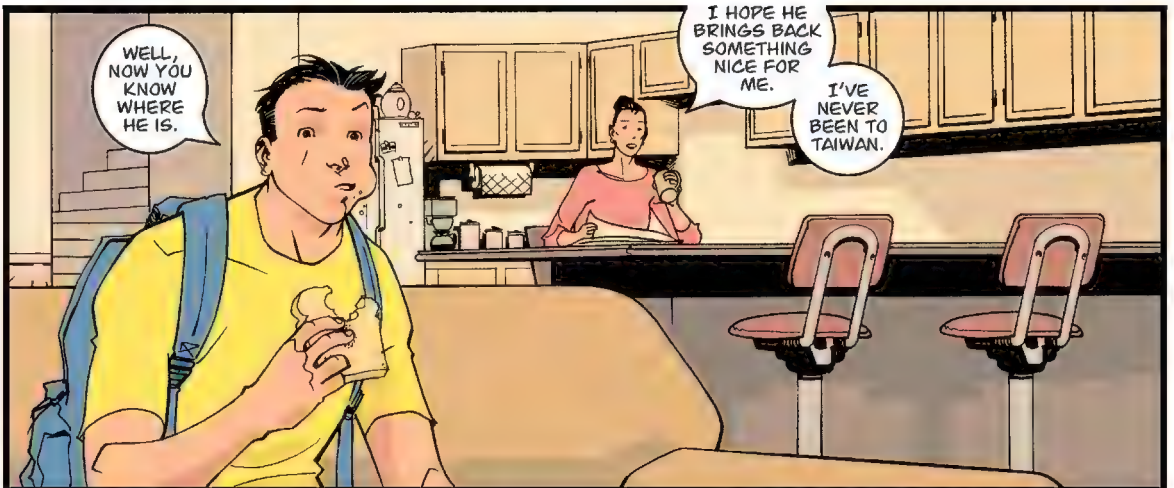
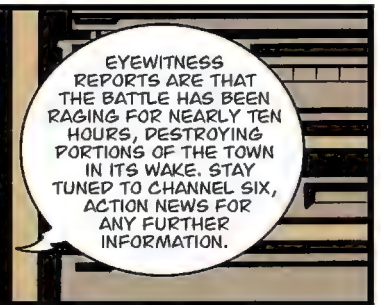
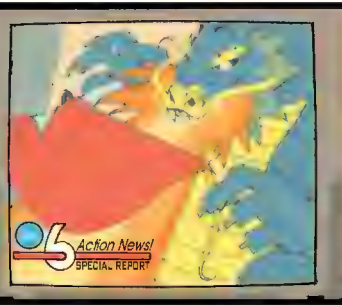
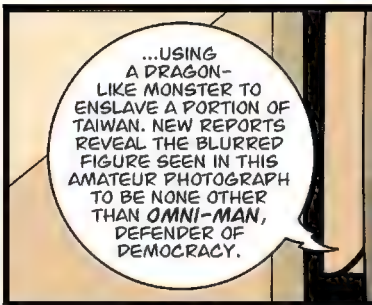
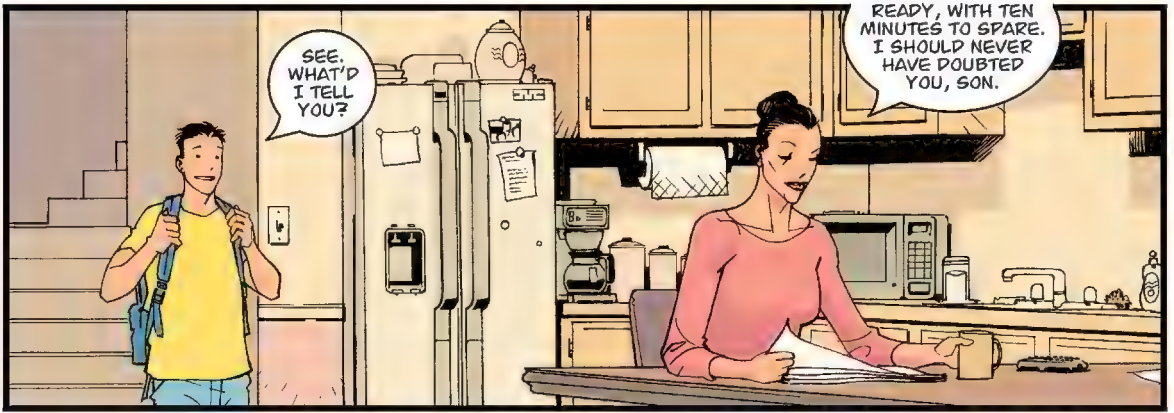


Y'KNOW,
YOU REALLY
RUINED MY
AFTERNOON.

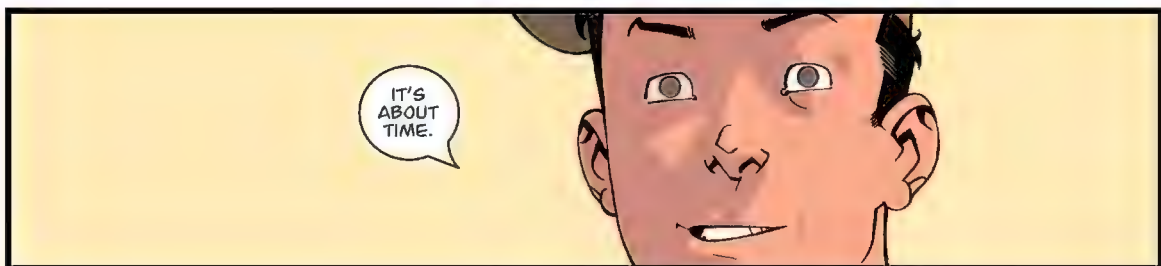
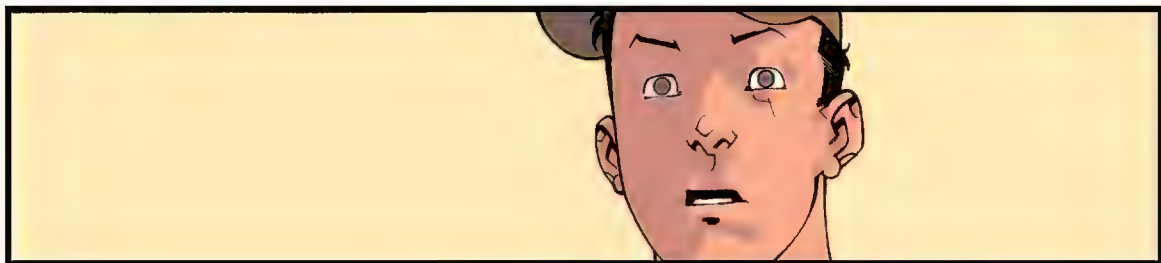


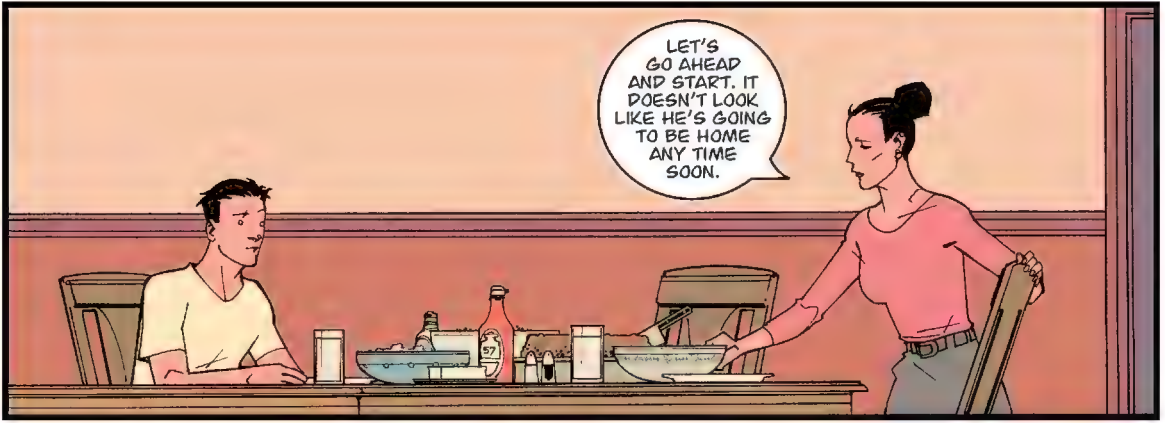














DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT DRAGON?



YEAH, ONCE I FOUND OUT WHO WAS CONTROLLING THE THING, THERE WASN'T MUCH TO IT. THE HARD PART WAS KEEPING THE CIVILIANS SAFE WHILE I FIGURED OUT WHO WAS BEHIND IT ALL.



YOUR PUBLISHER CALLED. HE WANTED TO CHECK AND SEE HOW THE NEXT BOOK WAS COMING ALONG.

I TOLD HIM YOU WERE ON ONE OF YOUR RESEARCH TRIPS.



I GUESS I'LL TAKE A DAY OFF THIS WEEKEND AND WRITE A BOOK FOR THEM. I'LL HAVE TO PICK UP A COUPLE SPARE KEYBOARDS.

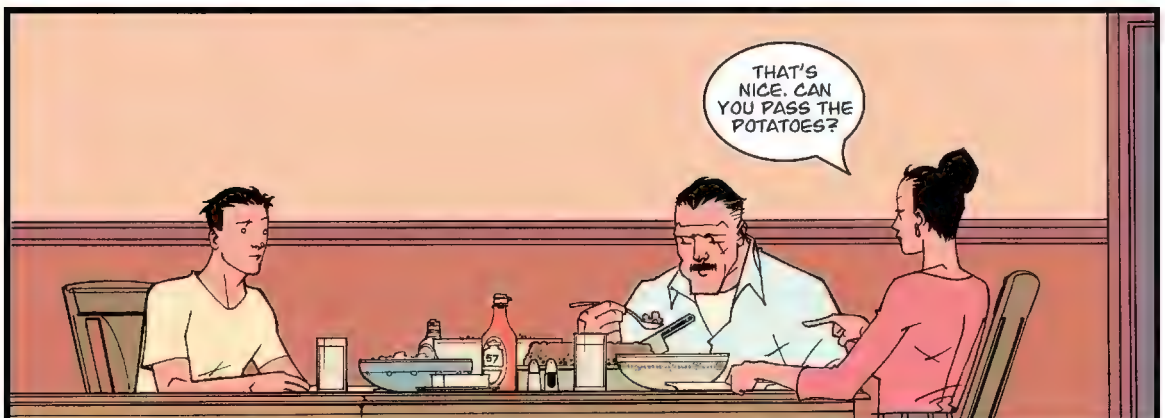
I HOPE THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE CAN COVER FOR ME.



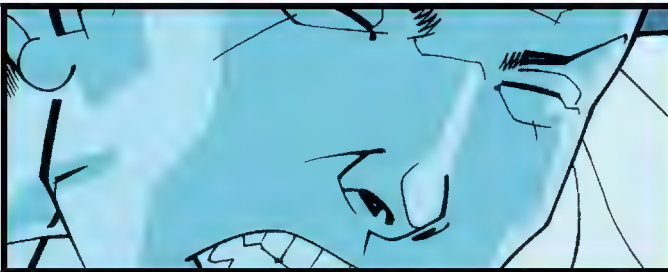
SO... HOW WAS YOUR DAY, MARK?

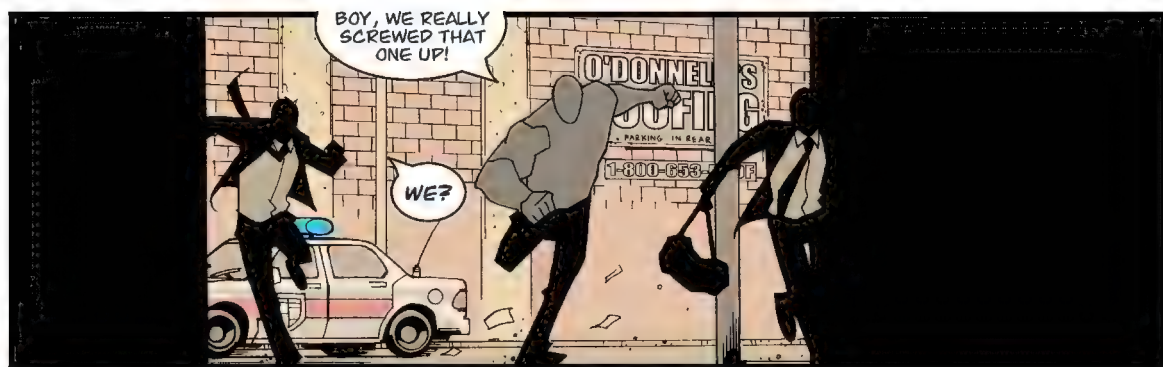


FINE. I THINK I'M FINALLY GETTING SUPERPOWERS.



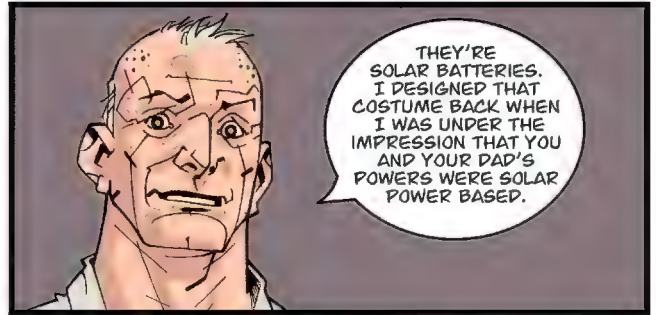
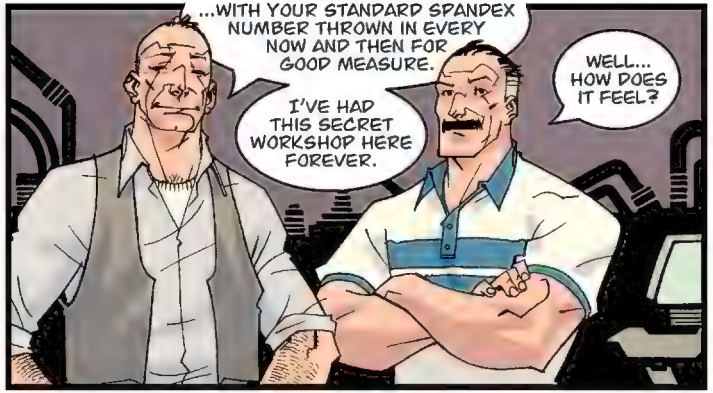
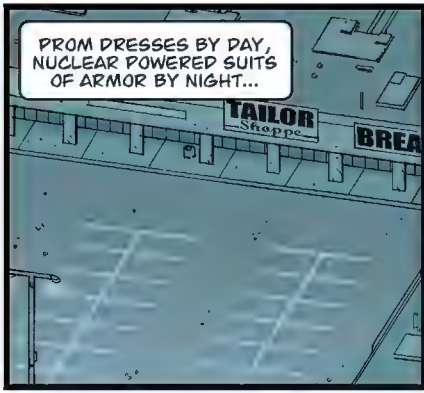
THAT'S NICE. CAN YOU PASS THE POTATOES?

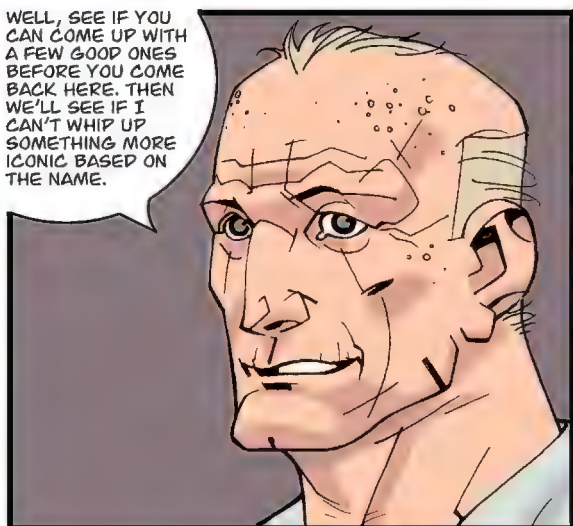
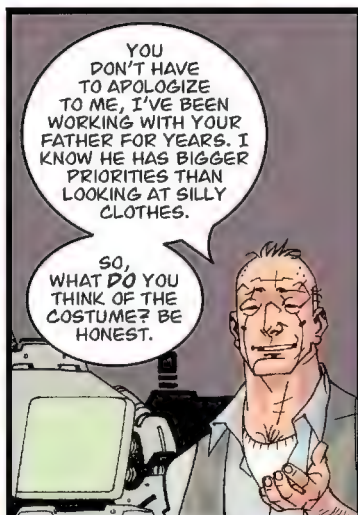
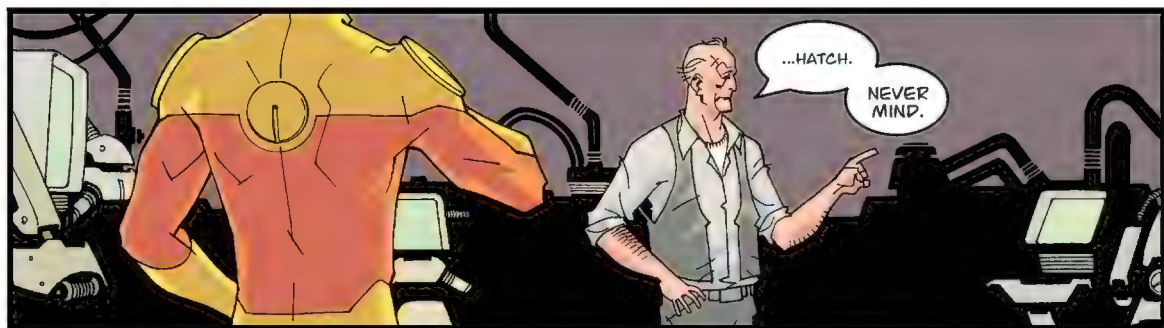


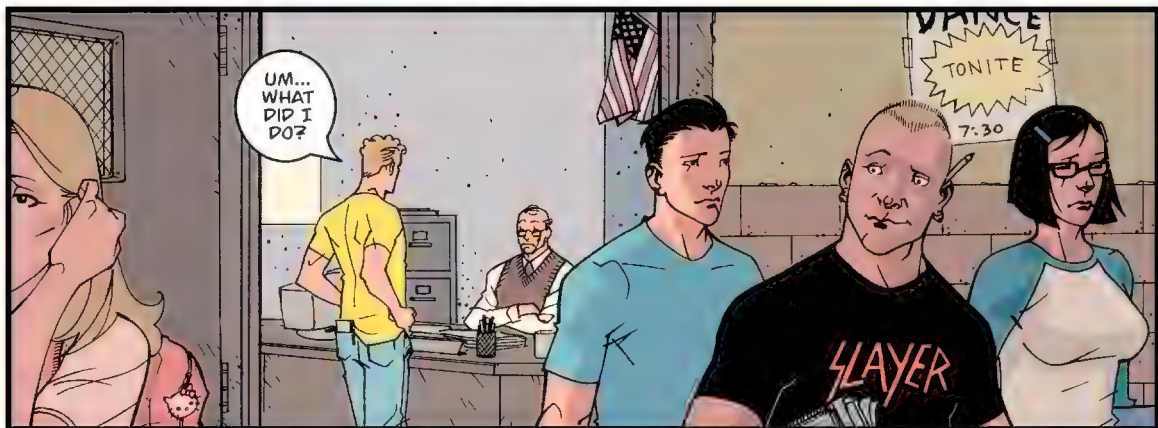
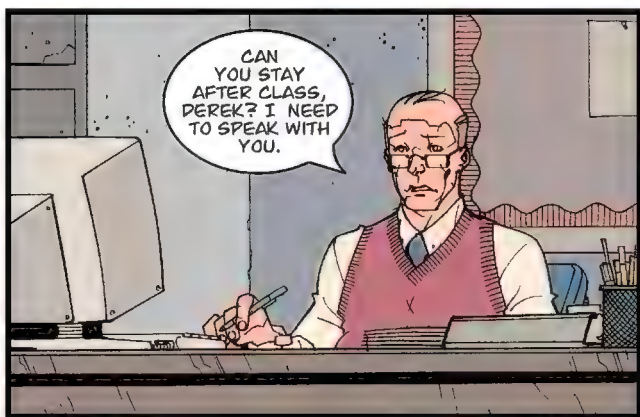
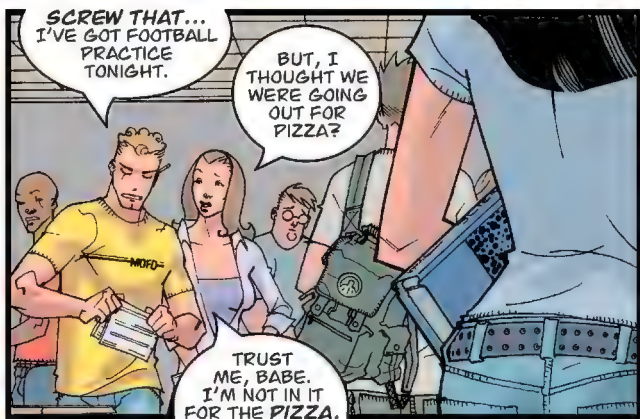
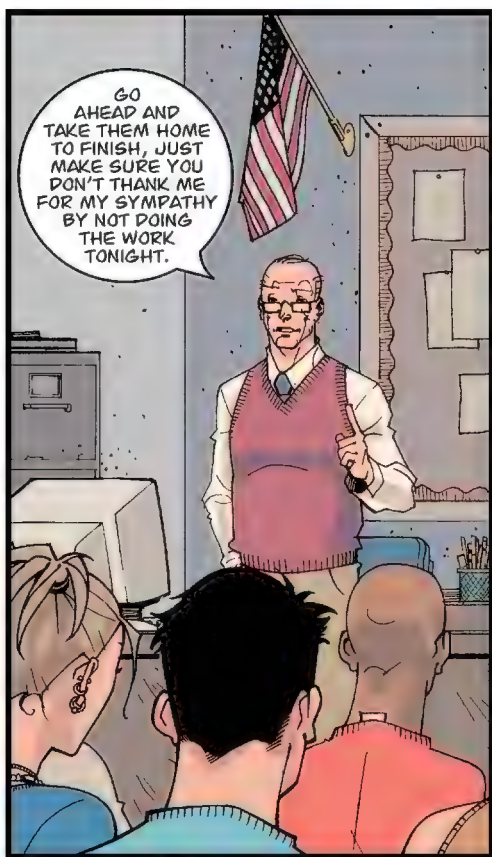
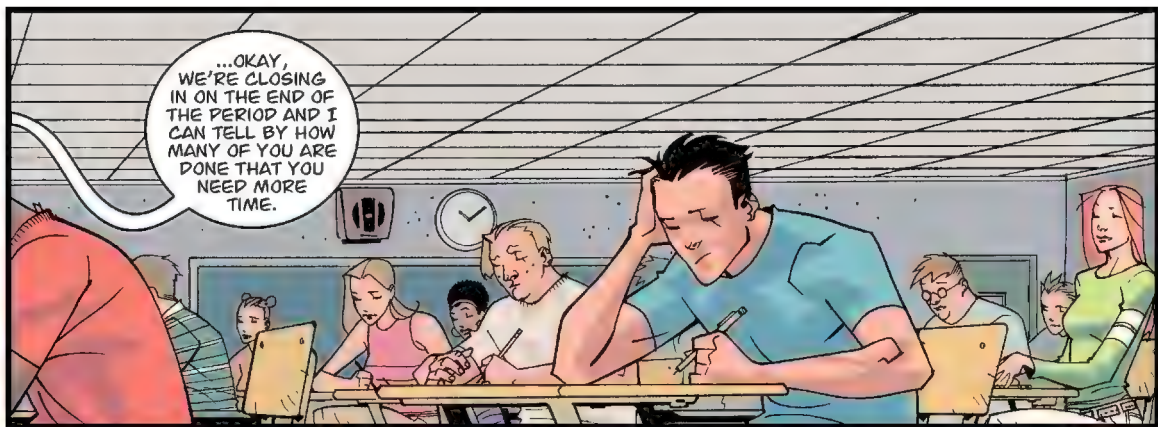


















JUST
TELL ME WHAT
HAPPENED, MR.
GRAYSON.

**PRINCIPAL'S
OFFICE**



HE WAS PICKING ON STEVE WHITE,
THE KID WHO HAS THE LOCKER
NEXT TO ME. I ASKED HIM TO
LEAVE STEVE ALONE, SO HE
PUSHED ME. THEN I PUSHED
HIM BACK. I DIDN'T MEAN
TO HURT HIM.

THAT BOY HAS A
HISTORY OF CAUSING
TROUBLE. YOU DON'T.
YOU'RE A GOOD KID, MARK.
I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU
START DOWN THAT PATH.



DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MY
NOSE IS DEEP IN THE BOOKS.
I'VE GOT TO GET INTO A GOOD
COLLEGE NEXT YEAR... I
KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS
STUFF IS. I JUST DON'T
LIKE WATCHING KIDS
GET PICKED ON.

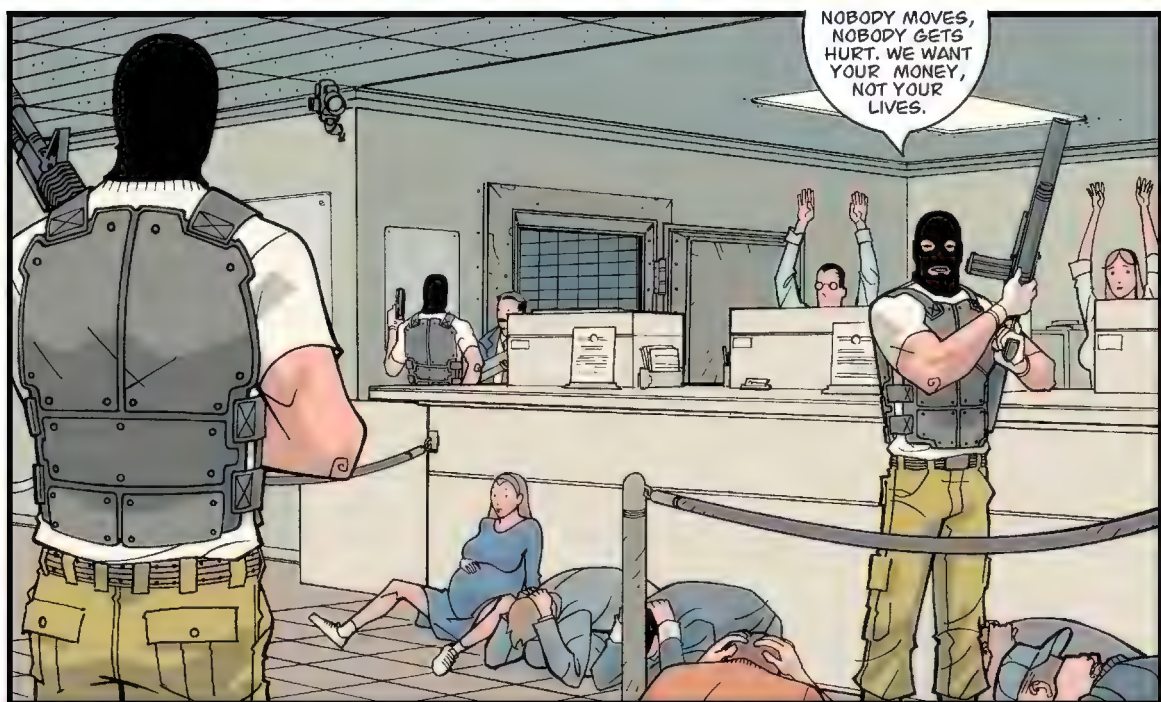


I UNDERSTAND THAT, AND TO BE
QUITE HONEST... I *CONDONE* IT,
BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN
A TEACHER, OR ONE OF THE
SECURITY GUARDS.

THAT BOY
WAS ALMOST
TWICE YOUR SIZE,
IT'S NOT YOUR
RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT THE
OTHER KIDS
HERE.



YOU'RE NOT
INVINCIBLE
YOU KNOW.









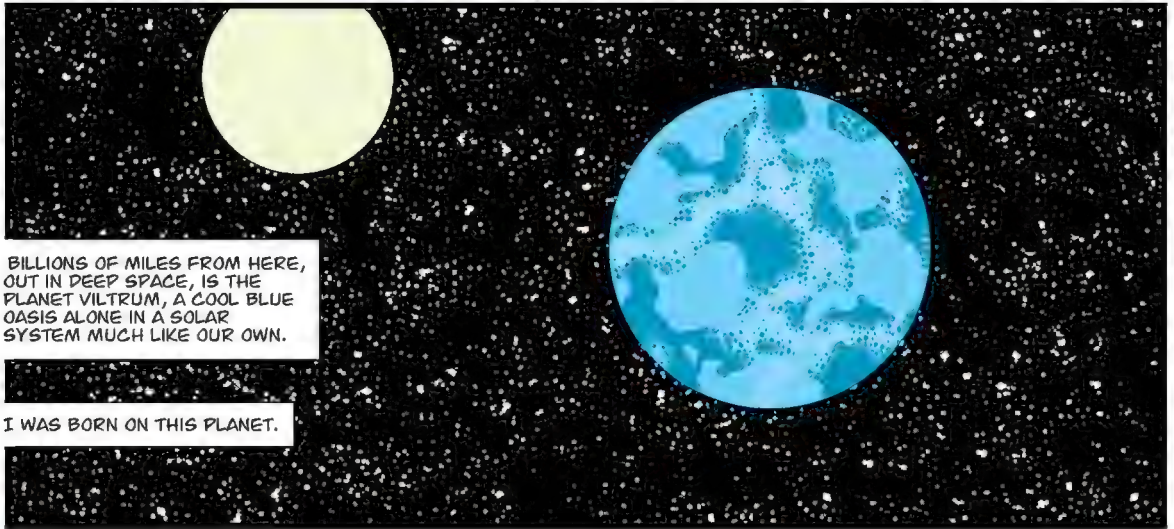
CHAPTER TWO





OKAY, SON. YOU
MAY HAVE NOTICED
BY NOW THAT I'M NOT
LIKE NORMAL DADS. I'VE...
AVOIDED THE SUBJECT
FOR FAR TOO MANY YEARS,
AND YOUR MOTHER AND I
HAVE DECIDED THAT IT'S
TIME YOU KNEW
THE TRUTH.

WE
THINK YOU'RE
OLD ENOUGH
FOR ME TO TELL
YOU WHERE I
REALLY COME
FROM.



BILLIONS OF MILES FROM HERE, OUT IN DEEP SPACE, IS THE PLANET VILTRUM, A COOL BLUE OASIS ALONE IN A SOLAR SYSTEM MUCH LIKE OUR OWN.

I WAS BORN ON THIS PLANET.



ITS PEOPLE ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNLIKE HUMANS, ALTHOUGH, THEY, AND I, HAVE ABILITIES IN ADDITION TO WHAT HUMANS HAVE. WE CAN FLY, MOVE AT SUPER-SPEED, AND POSSESS GREAT STRENGTH... BY HUMAN STANDARDS.

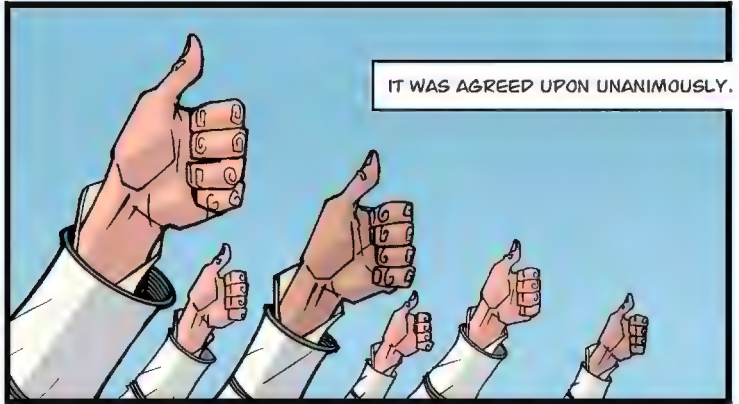
VILTRUM WAS A PLANET THAT HAD ACHIEVED A PERFECT GLOBAL SOCIETY. THERE WAS NO ILLNESS, NO MURDER, NO WAR, IT WAS A RELATIVE UTOPIA.



WITH NO CONFLICT AT HAND, OUR HIGH COUNCIL REFUSED TO LET OUR SOCIETY BECOME COMPLACENT.

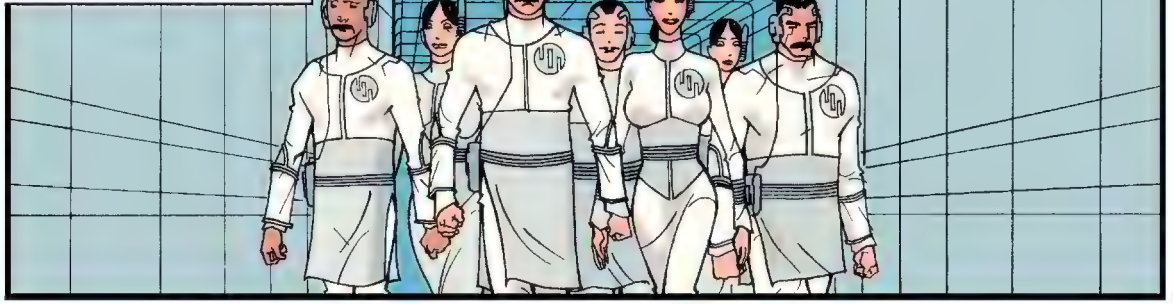


COUNCIL MEMBERS ARGUED THAT RATHER THAN REVEL IN OUR NEWFOUND PERFECTION, WE SHOULD TAKE IT UPON OURSELVES TO ENSURE THAT OTHER RACES, LESSER DEVELOPED THAN OUR OWN, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP TO OUR LEVEL OF ADVANCEMENT.



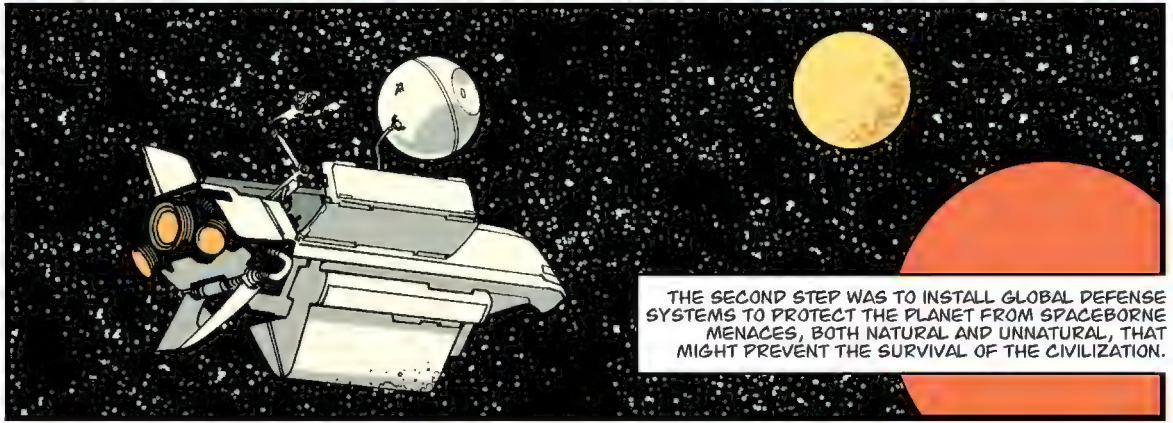
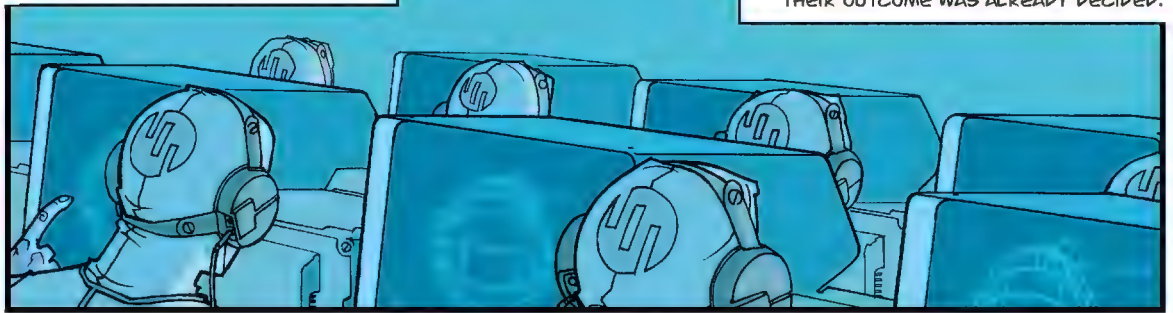
IT WAS AGREED UPON UNANIMOUSLY.

SHORTLY AFTER THE HIGH COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE IDEA, THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS FORMED.



THE FIRST STEP OF THE INITIATIVE WAS TO LOCATE OTHER PLANETS THAT WERE IN A CRUCIAL STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT...

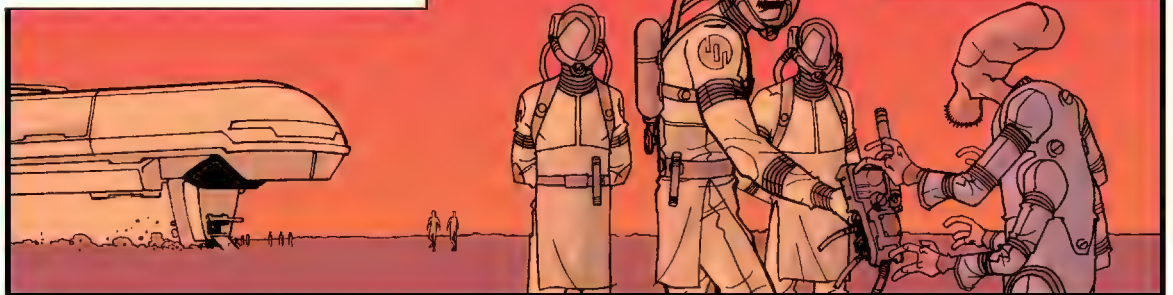
...PLANETS THAT WERE FAR ENOUGH ALONG THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF GREATNESS WAS THERE, BUT WERE NOT SO FAR ALONG THAT THEIR OUTCOME WAS ALREADY DECIDED.

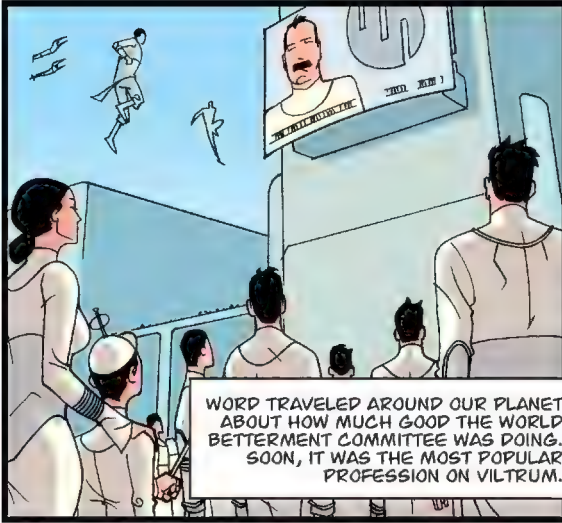


THE SECOND STEP WAS TO INSTALL GLOBAL DEFENSE SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE PLANET FROM SPACEBORNE MENACES, BOTH NATURAL AND UNNATURAL, THAT MIGHT PREVENT THE SURVIVAL OF THE CIVILIZATION.

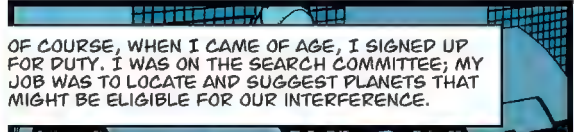
THE FINAL STEP WAS TO SEND A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS DOWN TO THE PLANET'S SURFACE TO ASSIST IN THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE CIVILIZATION'S TECHNOLOGIES.

THIS TEAM WOULD STAY BEHIND ON THE PLANET, MONITORING ITS PROGRESS.





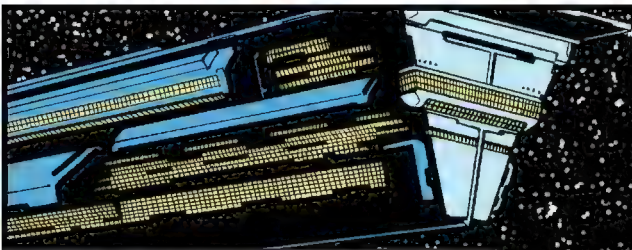
WORD TRAVELED AROUND OUR PLANET ABOUT HOW MUCH GOOD THE WORLD BETTERMENT COMMITTEE WAS DOING. SOON, IT WAS THE MOST POPULAR PROFESSION ON VILTRUM.



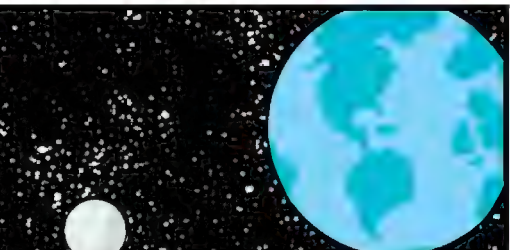
OF COURSE, WHEN I CAME OF AGE, I SIGNED UP FOR DUTY. I WAS ON THE SEARCH COMMITTEE; MY JOB WAS TO LOCATE AND SUGGEST PLANETS THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.



BY THEN, THE OPERATION HAD BEEN EXPANDED AND PERFECTED. I WAS STATIONED ON A MOBILE BASE THAT TRAVELED FROM PLANET TO PLANET AS WE DISCOVERED THEM.



I WAS IN MY THIRD YEAR OF SERVICE WHEN I DISCOVERED EARTH. I CONVINCED THE COMMITTEE TO DO A PHYSICAL INSPECTION OF THE PLANET.



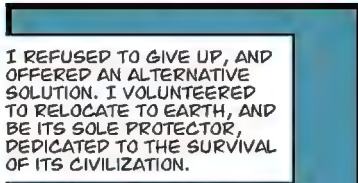
DURING THE LONG JOURNEY TO EARTH, I USED OUR LONG RANGE SENSORS TO STUDY THE PLANET AND THE CIVILIZATION THAT LIVED THERE.



BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED, I HAD GROWN FOND OF EARTH AND THE PEOPLE ON IT. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE ACHIEVEMENTS THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.



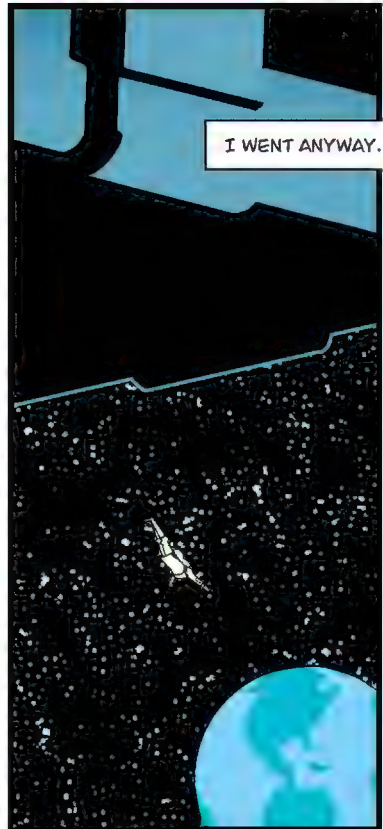
I PLEADED FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ADD EARTH TO OUR BETTERMENT SCHEDULE, BUT IT WAS DEEMED TOO CRUDE AND NOT DEVELOPED ENOUGH FOR OUR INTERFERENCE.



I REFUSED TO GIVE UP, AND OFFERED AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION. I VOLUNTEERED TO RELOCATE TO EARTH, AND BE ITS SOLE PROTECTOR, DEDICATED TO THE SURVIVAL OF ITS CIVILIZATION.



DUE TO EARTH'S LOCATION IN SUCH A REMOTE AREA OF THE UNIVERSE, I WAS WARNED THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE ANY CHANCE OF RETURNING.



I WENT ANYWAY.

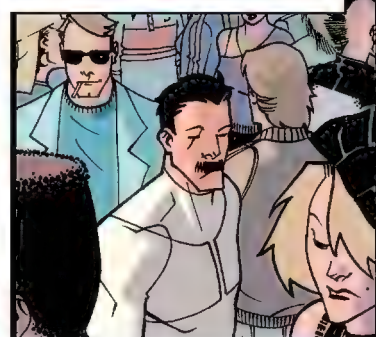
NO AMOUNT OF RESEARCH COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR WHAT I WOULD EXPERIENCE UPON MY ARRIVAL.



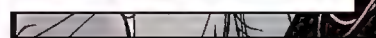
EARTH WAS A VIBRANT NEST OF INDIVIDUALITY. I MARVELED AT THE PEOPLE I SAW AS THEY SCURRIED ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES.



IT WAS THERE, AMONG THE PEOPLE, THAT I INSTANTLY KNEW I HAD MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.



I MIGHT HAVE EVEN FORGOTTEN WHAT MY MISSION ON EARTH WAS...

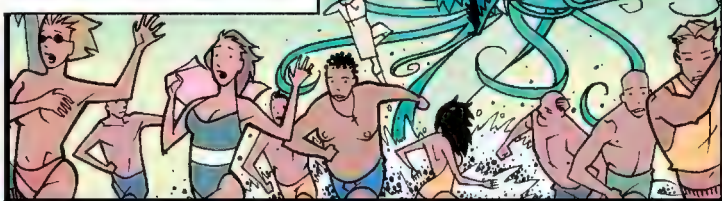


...HAD I NOT BEEN SO ABRUPTLY REMINDED.



WITH MY MISSION CLEARLY AT HAND, I WENT TO WORK.

THE PEOPLE OF EARTH NEEDED SOMEONE TO KEEP THEM SAFE...

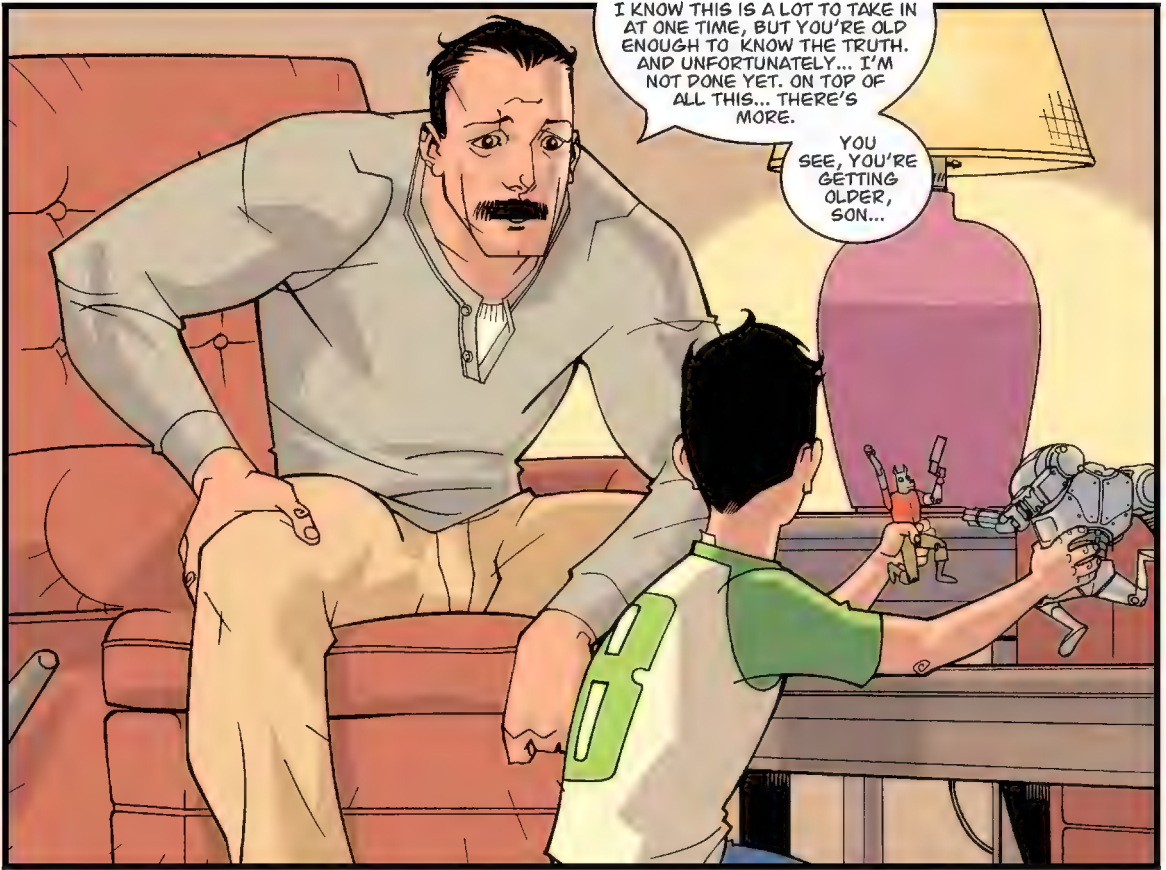


...AND I WAS HERE TO PROTECT THEM.



IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR BEFORE I MET YOUR MOTHER... BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.





I KNOW THIS IS A LOT TO TAKE IN AT ONE TIME, BUT YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW THE TRUTH. AND UNFORTUNATELY... I'M NOT DONE YET. ON TOP OF ALL THIS... THERE'S MORE.

YOU SEE, YOU'RE GETTING OLDER, SON...



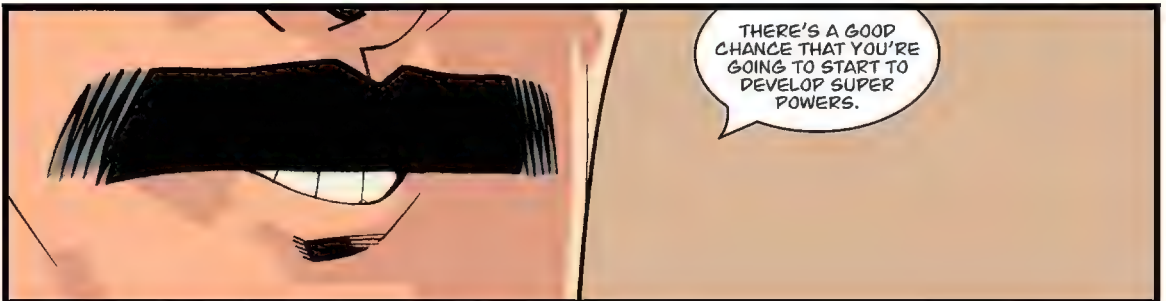
...THINGS ARE GOING TO START TO CHANGE FOR YOU IN A FEW YEARS AS YOU HIT PUBERTY.

YOU'RE GOING TO START TO GET ACNE.

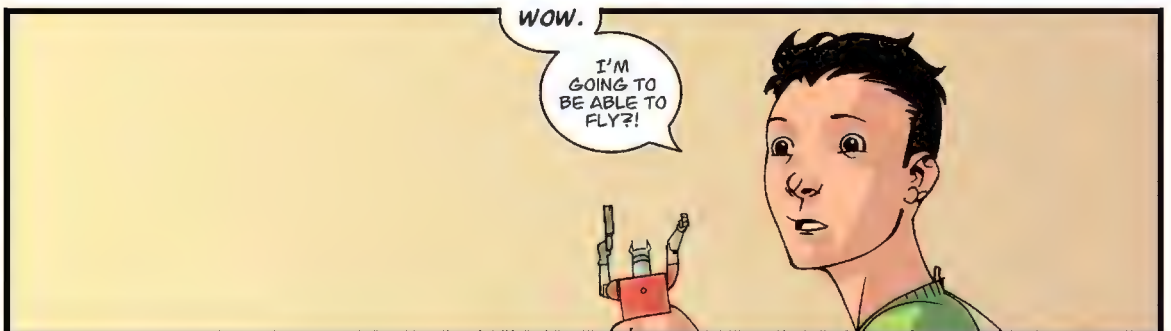
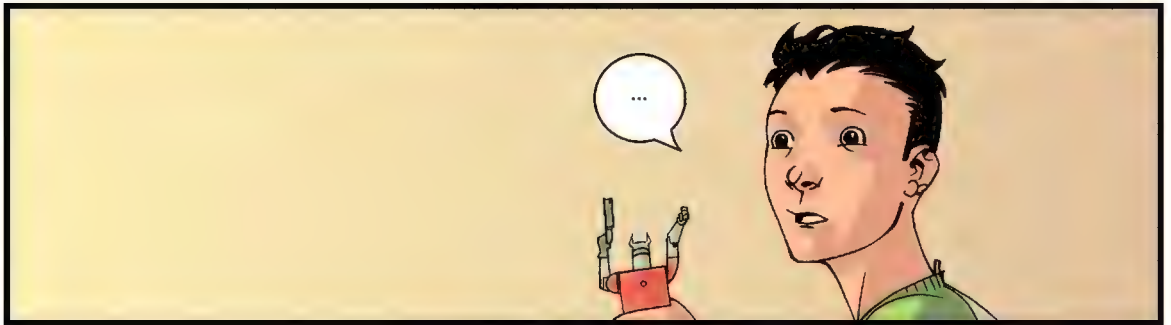
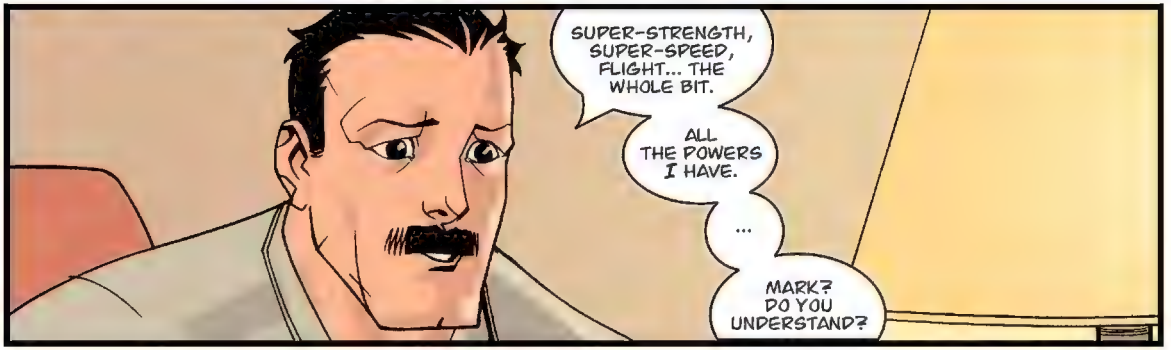
YOUR VOICE WILL START TO CRACK AND EVENTUALLY CHANGE.

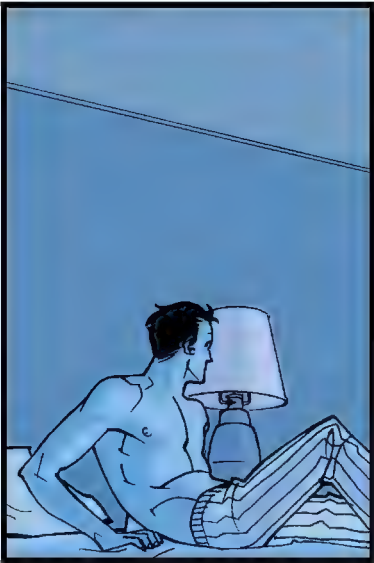
YOU'LL BEGIN TO GROW HAIR IN STRANGE AND NEW PLACES.

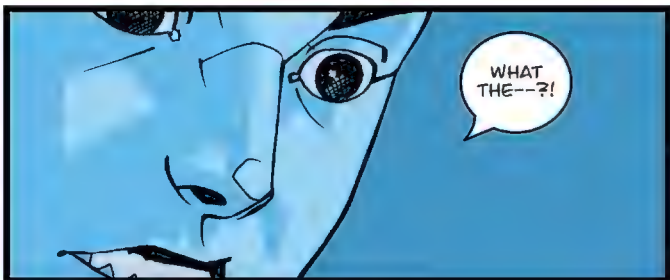
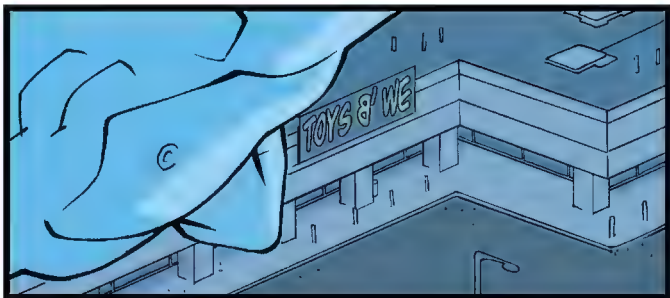
YOU'RE GOING TO START LOOKING AT GIRLS IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT.



THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO START TO DEVELOP SUPER POWERS.









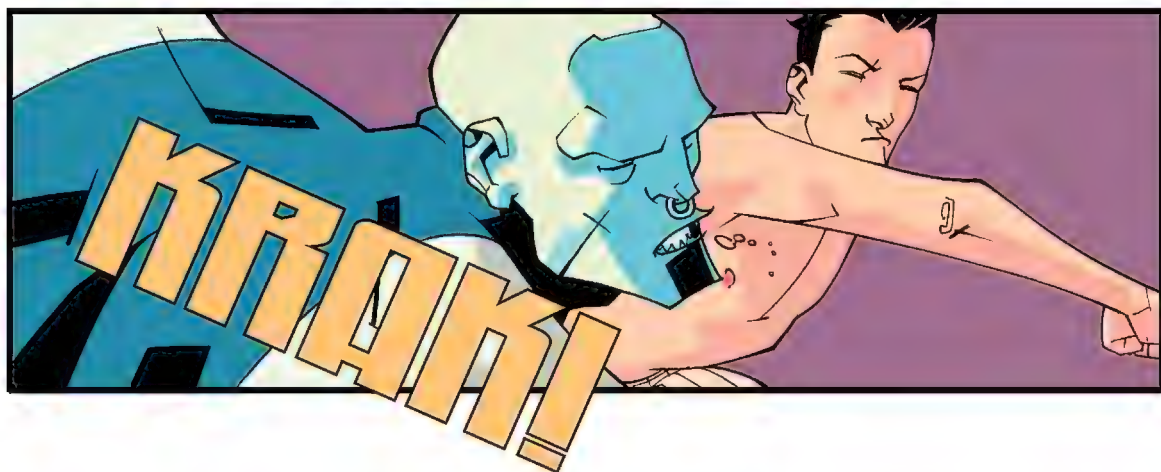
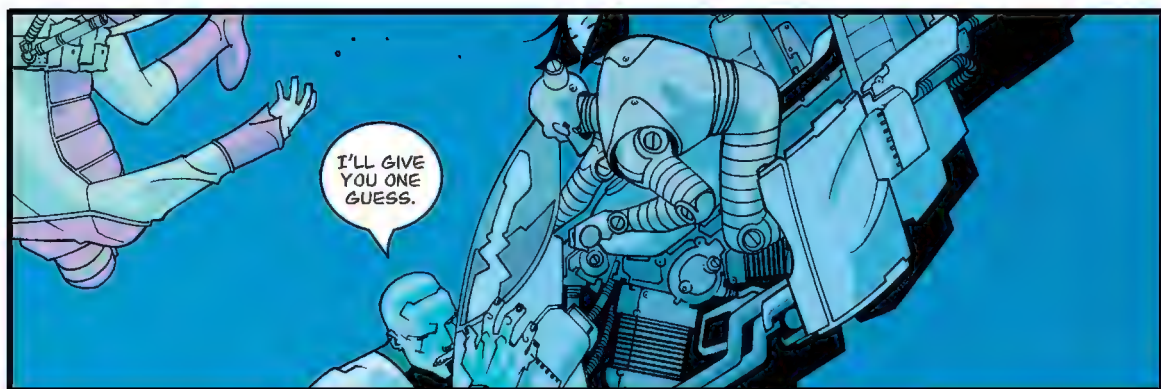


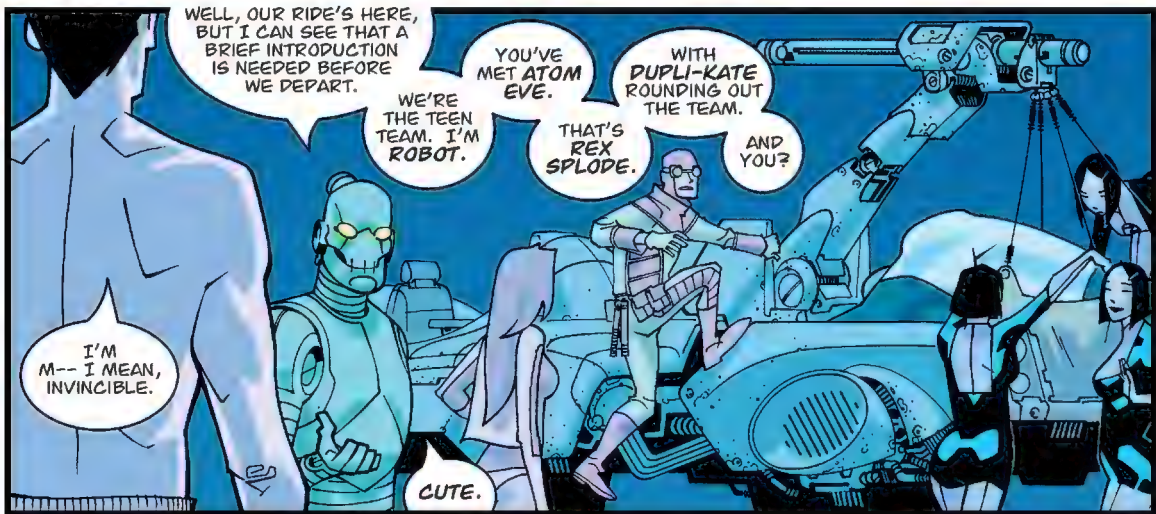
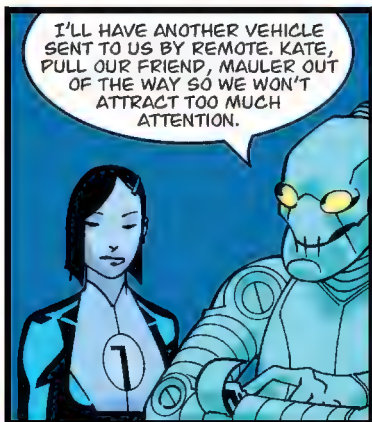
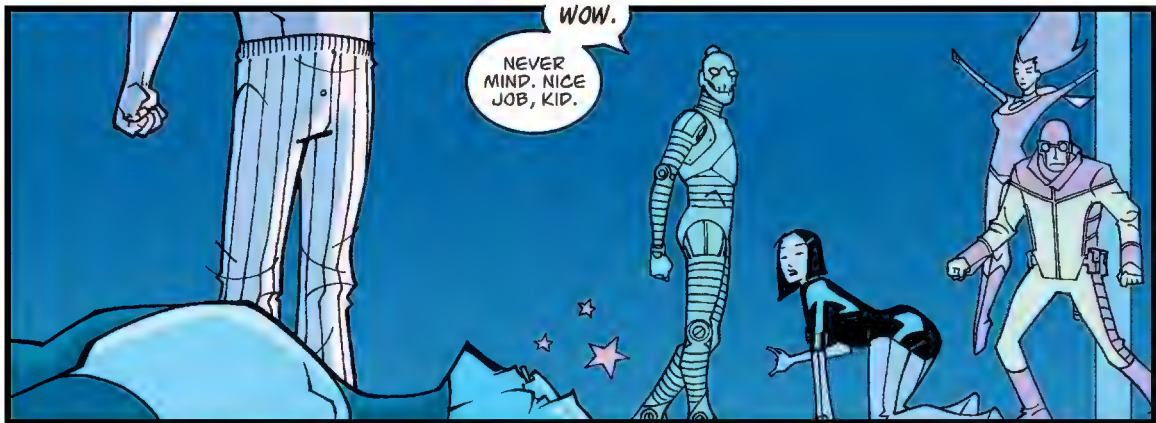


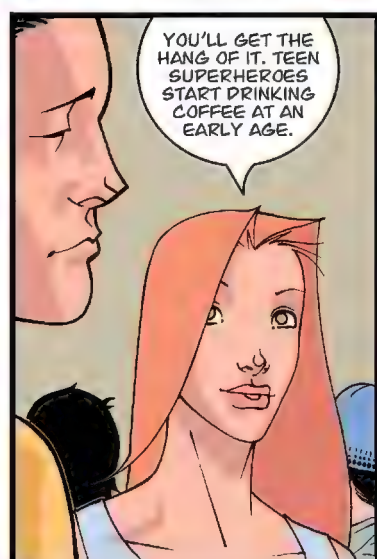
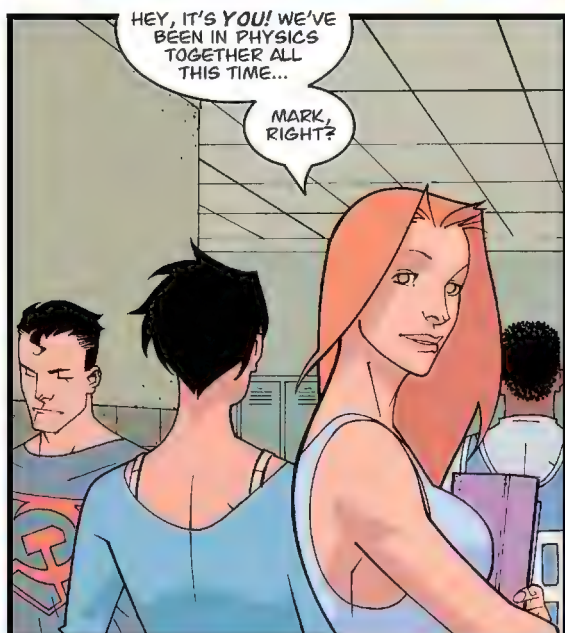
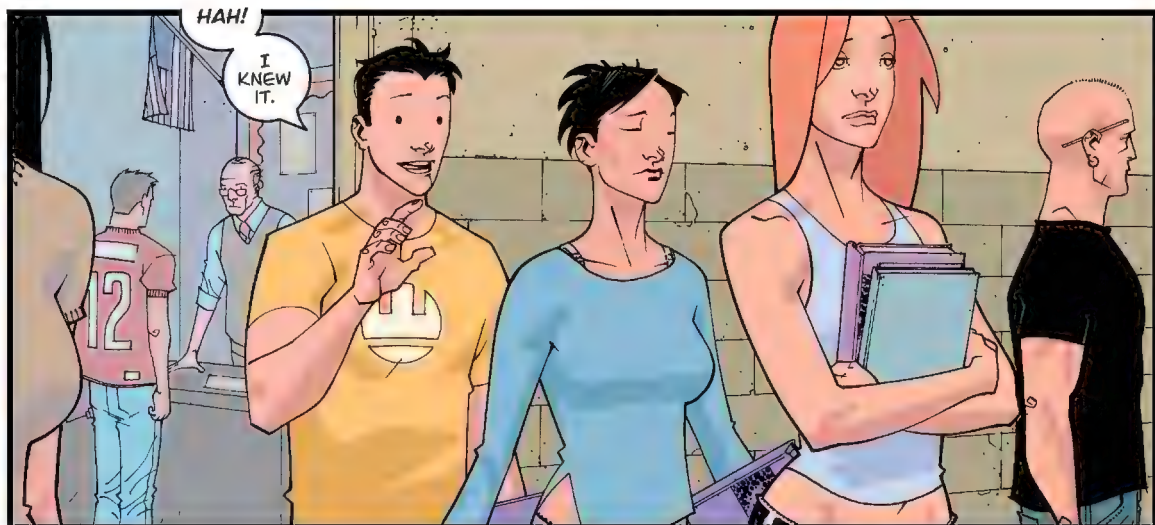
THAT WAS
A BB, YOU
DON'T WANT
TO SEE WHAT I
CAN DO WITH
A GOLF
BALL.

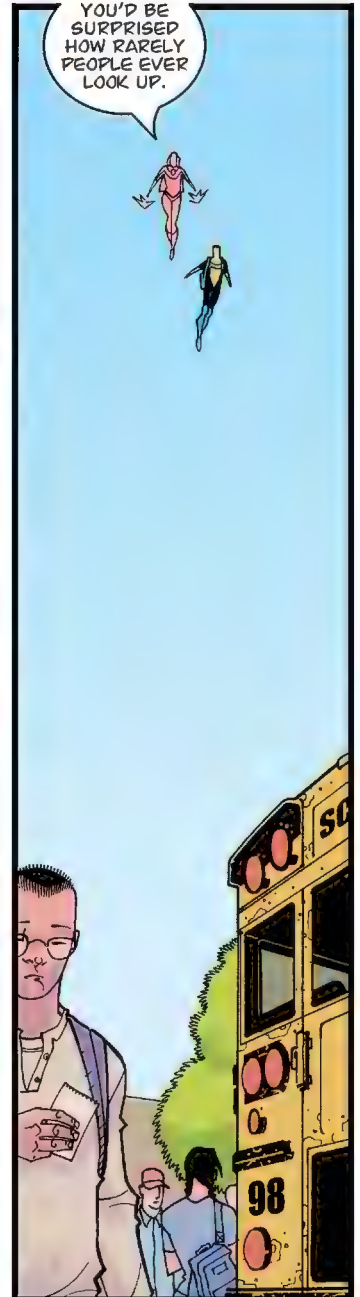
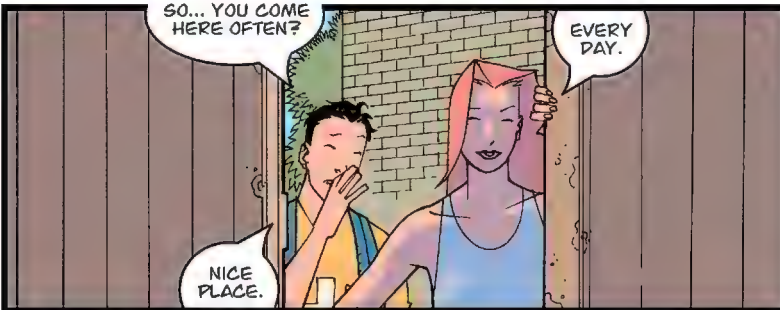
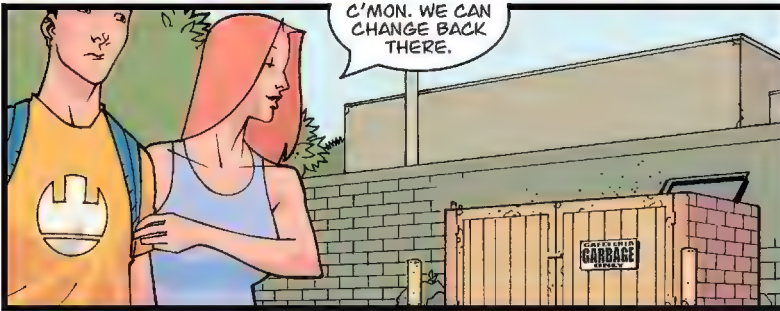
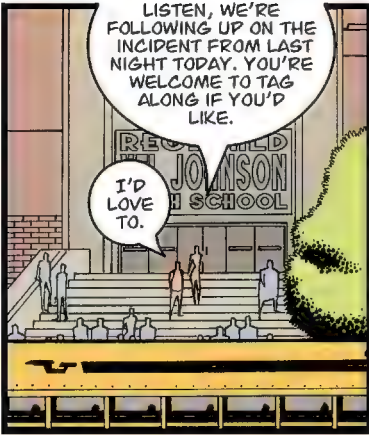
NOW.

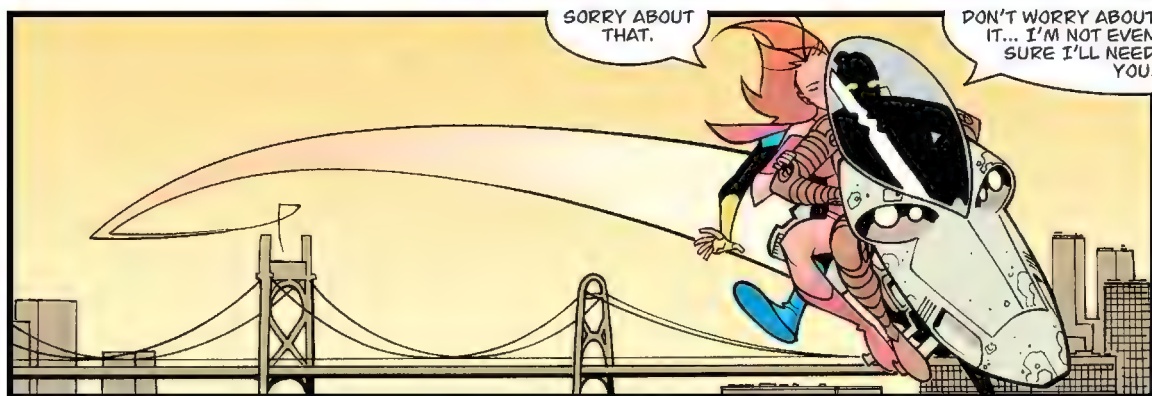
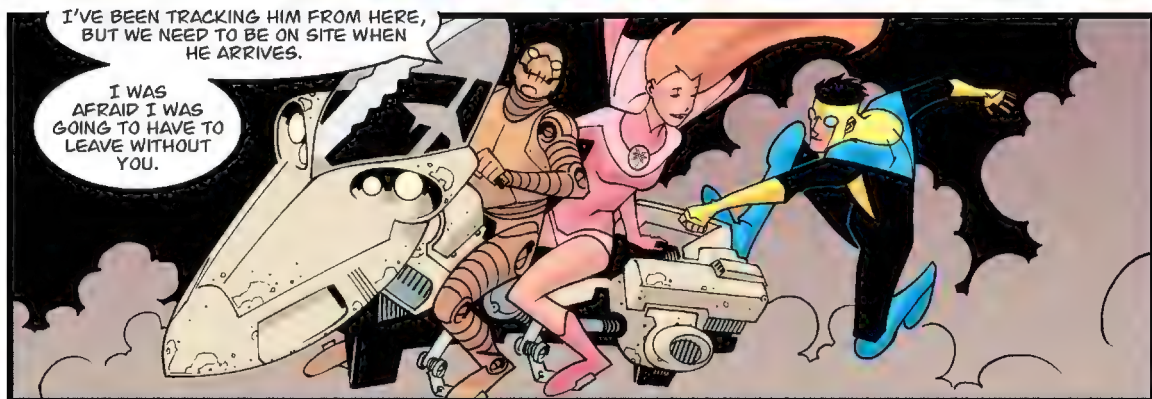
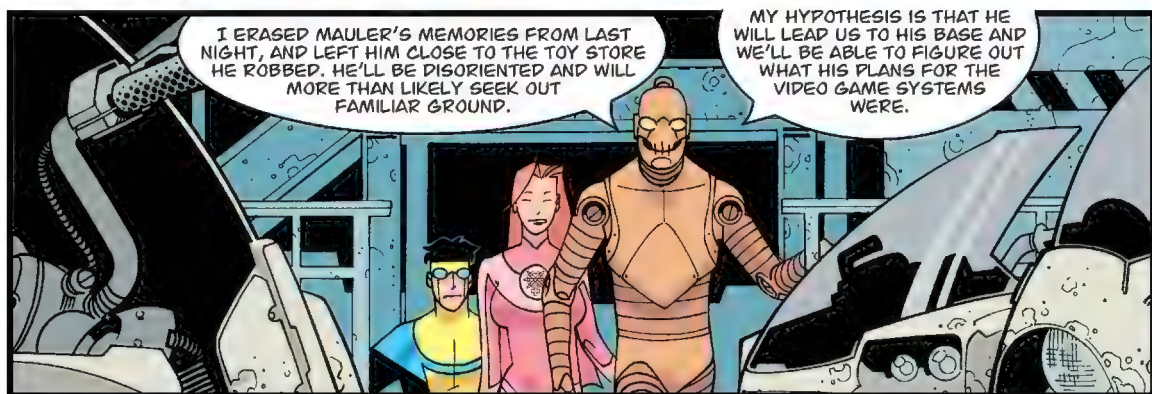
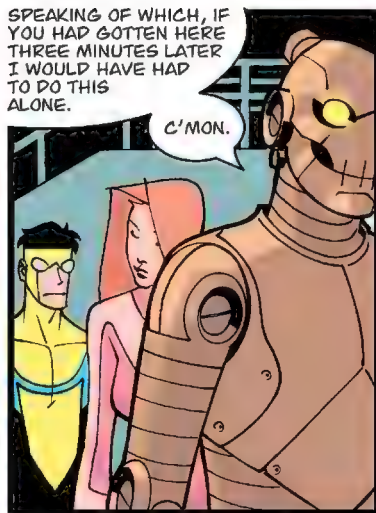
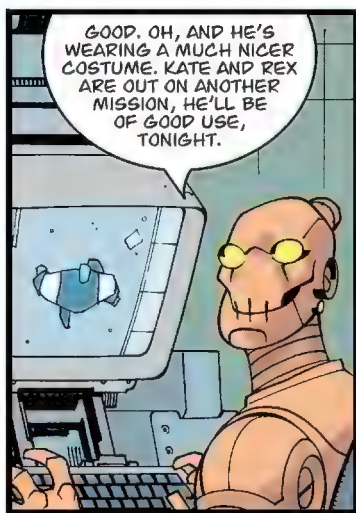
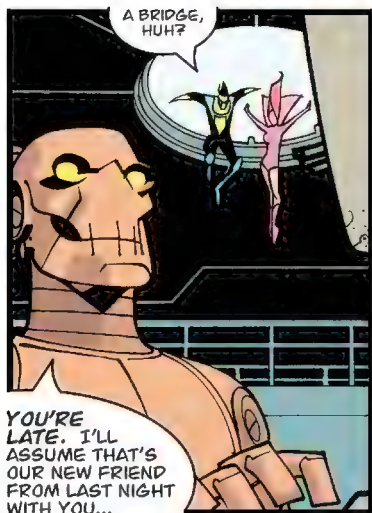
WHO
STARTED
IT?













THERE HE IS.



...



WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE NEED THOSE PROCESSORS! WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE ENOUGH TO POWER THE ROBOTS WITHOUT THAT NEW SHIPMENT.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. ALL LAST NIGHT IS A BLUR. I REMEMBER GOING OUT TO GET THE NEW SHIPMENT AT THE TOYS B' WE... AND THEN... NOTHING.

SO I CAME BACK.



I DON'T THINK YOU REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT OUR WORK HERE IS. WE BADLY NEED THOSE EXTRA PROCESSORS. THAT SHIPMENT IS ALREADY IN STOCK BY NOW, AND THEY WON'T BE RECEIVING ANOTHER FOR NEARLY A MONTH.



I'M NOT SURE OUR PLANS CAN WAIT THAT LONG.



KEEP THE OTHER ONE FROM ACTIVATING THE ROBOTS, I'LL DEAL WITH THIS ONE!



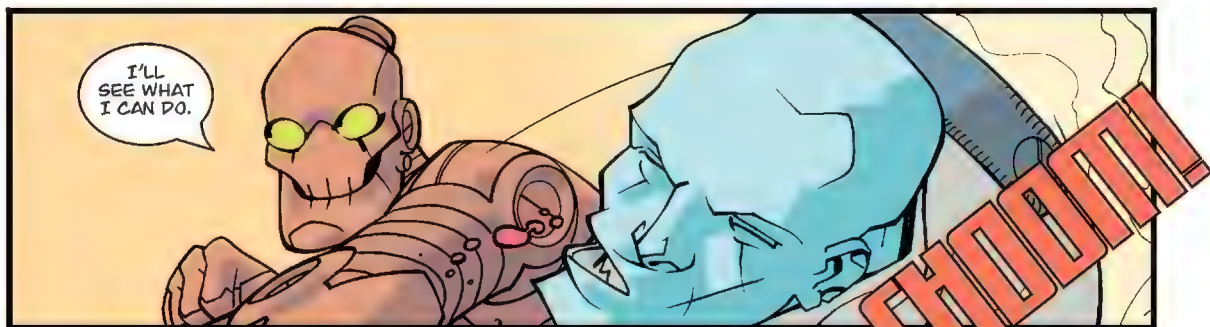
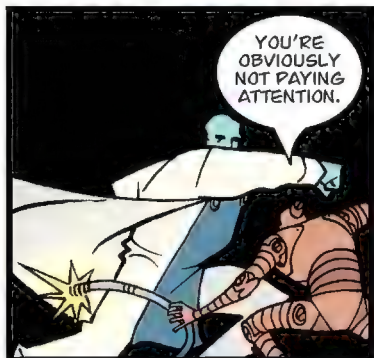
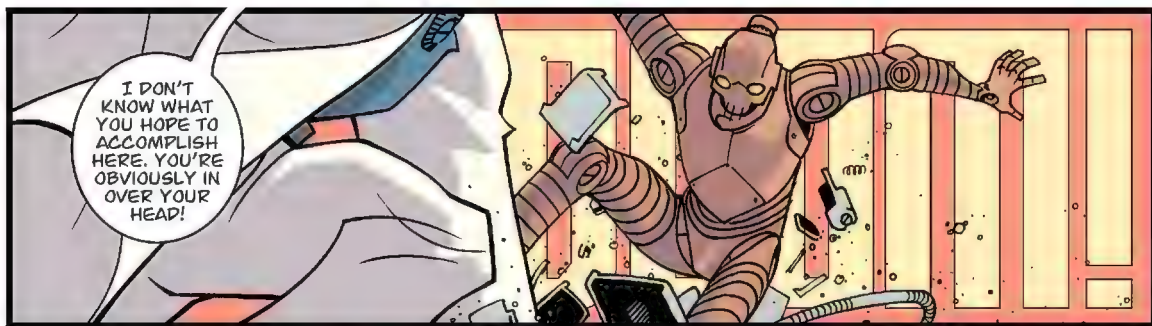
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE NEED THE ROBOTS TO DEFEAT YOU?



LET GO!



KROOM!





BOOM!





CHAPTER THREE





WE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING WITH THE AUTHORITIES TO GIVE THEM ALL THE INFORMATION WE CAN IN ORDER TO HELP THEM LOCATE THE MISSING STUDENTS.

REGINALD
VEL JOHNSON
HIGH SCHOOL



I MUST STRESS TO YOU ALL THAT THIS IS NOT A REASON TO PANIC. THE THREE MISSING STUDENTS, THOUGH REPORTED MISSING ON DIFFERENT DAYS, DID KNOW EACH OTHER. IT'S POSSIBLE THIS WAS PLANNED BY THEM AND NO FOUL PLAY HAS TAKEN PLACE.

STILL, WE CALLED THIS SCHOOL MEETING SO THAT THE RUMORS WOULDN'T OVERWHELM THE TRUTH.

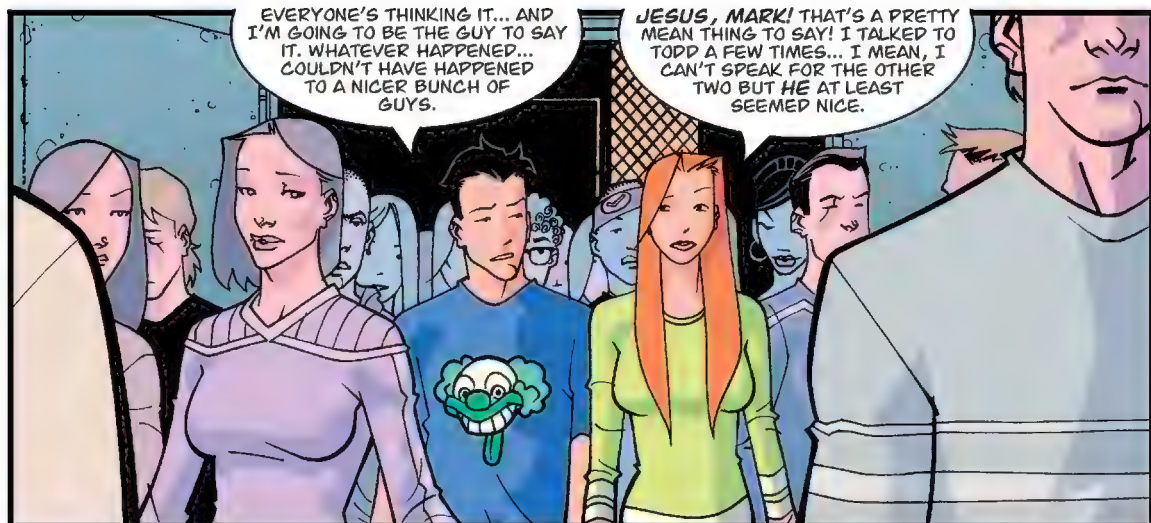
YOU NOW KNOW WHAT WE KNOW. JUST TO BE SAFE TRY NOT TO GO ANYWHERE ALONE, AND PLEASE REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS TO EITHER ME OR ANY OF THE OTHER PEOPLE YOU SEE HERE BESIDE ME.



IF WE'RE LUCKY, THE MISSING STUDENTS WILL SHOW UP AND EVERYTHING WILL GO BACK TO NORMAL, BUT UNTIL THEN KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN.

IF ANY OF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE IN ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AND MORE THAN LIKELY FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.

YOU CAN ALL GO BACK TO CLASS NOW. JUST GO ON TO FOURTH PERIOD FROM HERE. PEOPLE WHO ARE ON FIRST LUNCH PERIOD CAN GO ON TO THE CAFETERIA. THE BELL WILL RING IN SEVEN MINUTES, PLEASE BE WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BY THEN.



EVERYONE'S THINKING IT... AND I'M GOING TO BE THE GUY TO SAY IT. WHATEVER HAPPENED... COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED TO A NICER BUNCH OF GUYS.

JESUS, MARK! THAT'S A PRETTY MEAN THING TO SAY! I TALKED TO TODD A FEW TIMES... I MEAN, I CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE OTHER TWO BUT HE AT LEAST SEEMED NICE.



YOU'RE TOTALLY CLUELESS! WHY DO YOU THINK TODD JEFFERSON WOULD BE NICE TO YOU?

OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD... I THINK IT MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU BEING AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE GIRL.



YOU KNOW I'M DATING REX, RIGHT?



WHOA, WHOA! THAT'S NOT WHERE I WAS GOING WITH THAT AT ALL!

HEH.

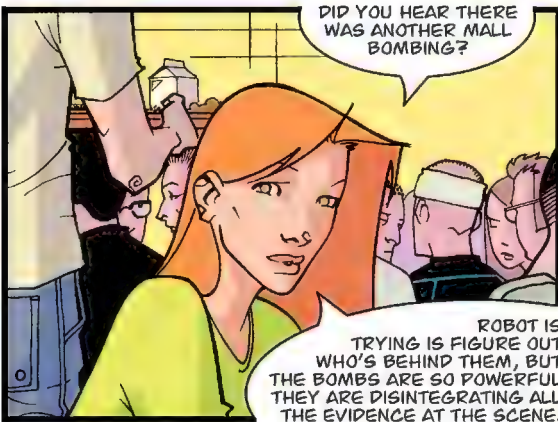
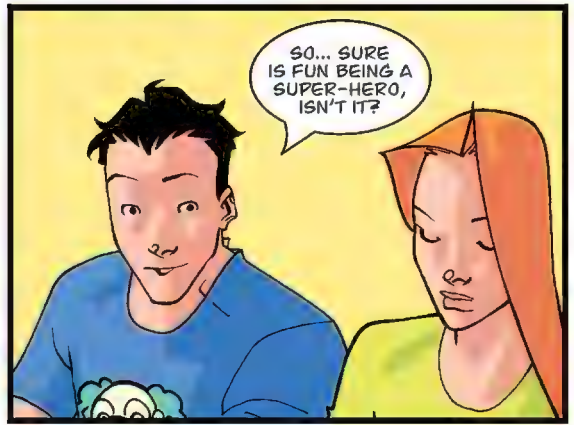
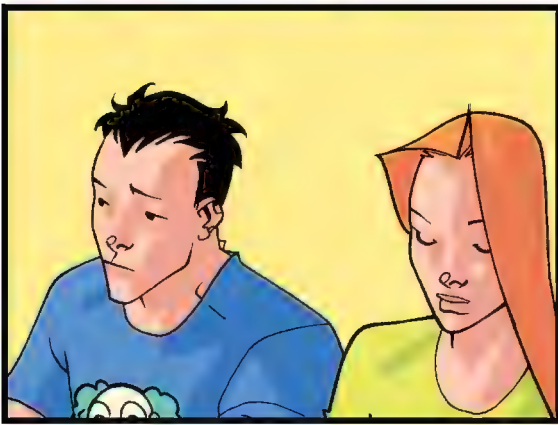
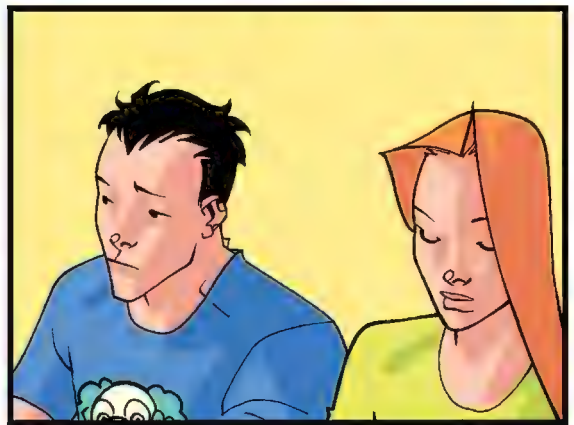
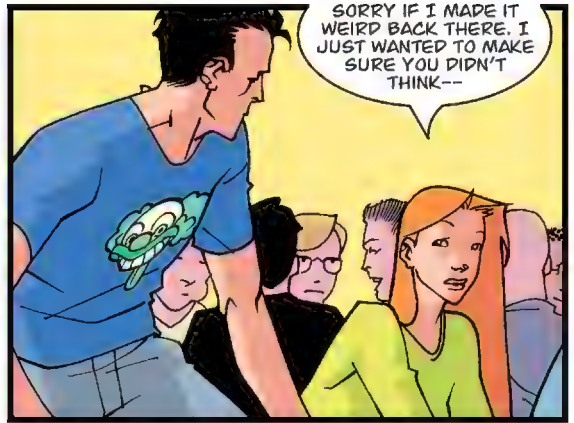


RIIIGHT.

SO, ARE YOU ON YOUR WAY TO THE CAFETERIA, TOO, OR ARE YOU JUST WALKING WITH ME?

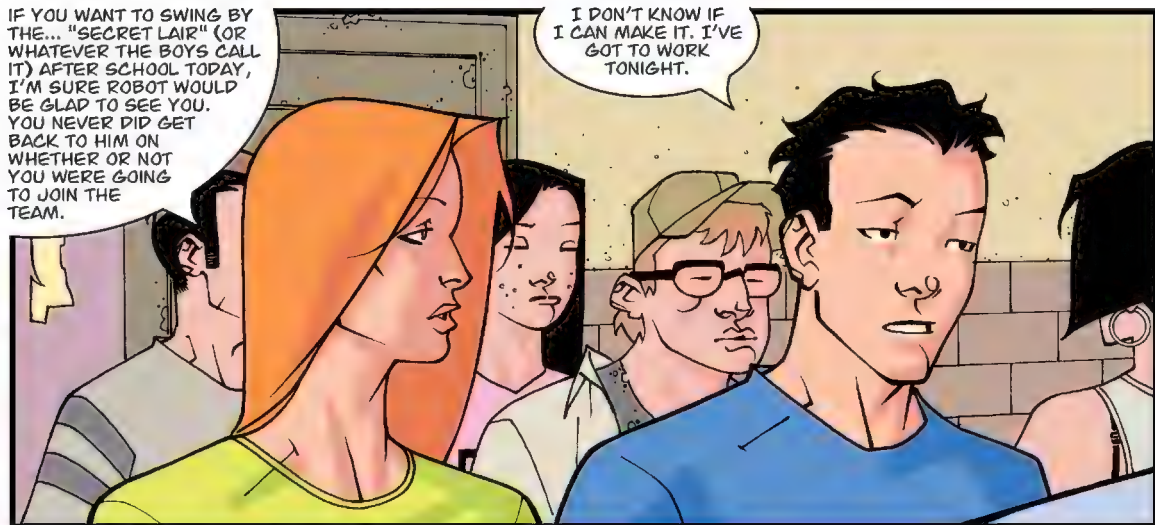
WELL, I GUESS WE HAVE THE SAME LUNCH PERIOD, TOO.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE HADN'T MET BEFORE LAST MONTH.

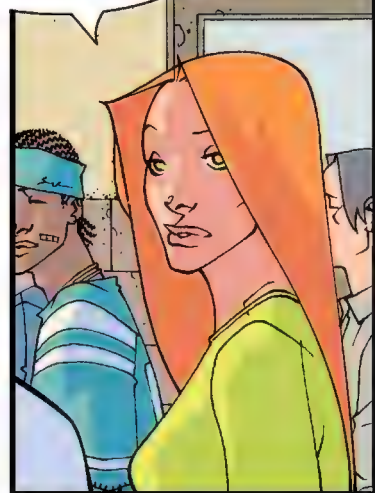


IF YOU WANT TO SWING BY THE... "SECRET LAIR" (OR WHATEVER THE BOYS CALL IT) AFTER SCHOOL TODAY, I'M SURE ROBOT WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE YOU. YOU NEVER DID GET BACK TO HIM ON WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE GOING TO JOIN THE TEAM.

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN MAKE IT. I'VE GOT TO WORK TONIGHT.



YOU STILL WORK AT THE BURGER MART? ISN'T YOUR DAD A SEMI-FAMOUS NOVELIST?!



WELL... YEAH, I MEAN... IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED THE MONEY, HE MAKES ME WORK THERE BECAUSE HE THINKS IT BUILDS CHARACTER.



WEIRD.

WELL, I'VE GOT TO GET TO CLASS.

SEE YOU AROUND.

LATER.



SO, THE RUMORS ARE TRUE. THE GUYS ARE GOING OUT.



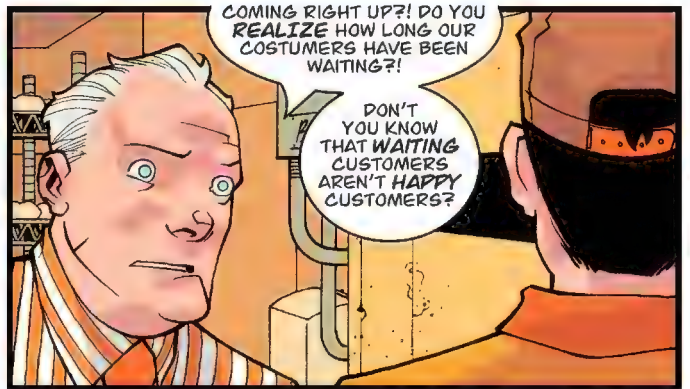
OH. HEY, WILLIAM... GOING OUT WHERE?

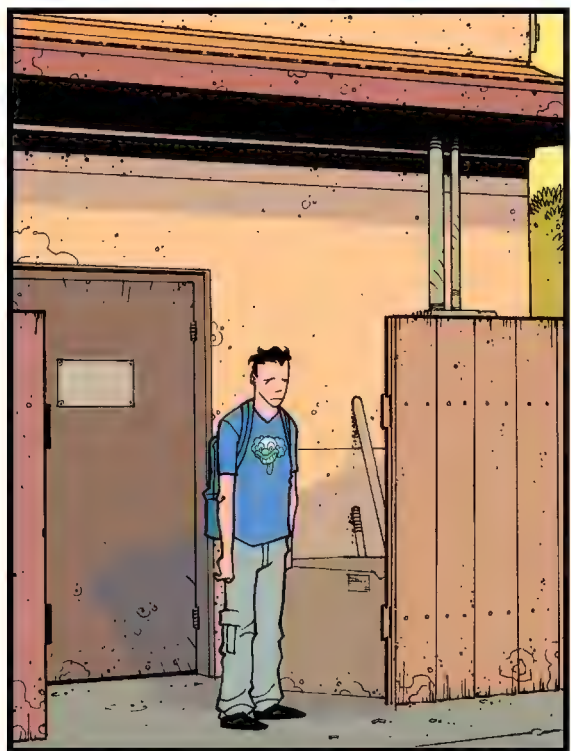
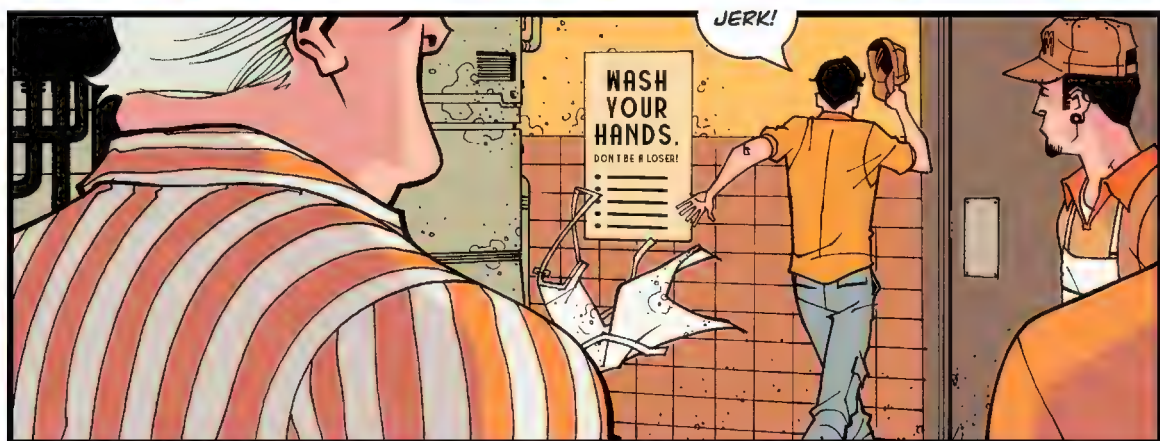
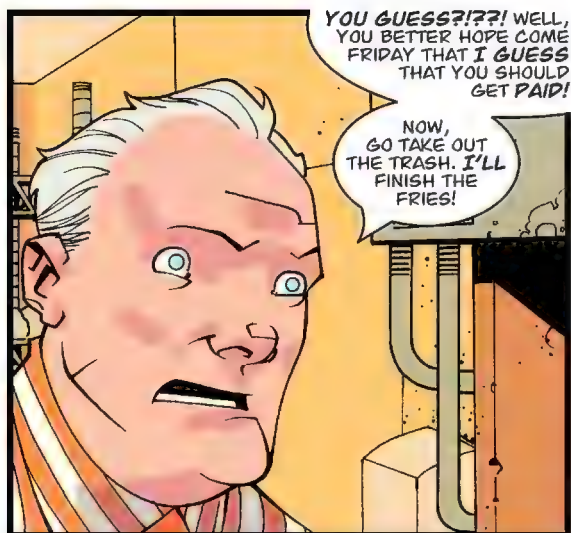


DON'T PLAY DUMB WITH ME. YOU TWO ARE AN ITEM, BOYFRIEND AND GIRLFRIEND, AND ALL THE PERKS THAT COME WITH IT.

TRUST ME. SHE'S NOT MY GIRLFRIEND.











HEY,
MARK. WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?



I'M JUST
GETTING READY TO
GO OUT ON PATROL.
I FIGURED I'D TAKE
A STROLL AROUND THE
CITY BY AIR AND MAKE
SURE EVERYTHING'S
ON THE UP AND
UP.



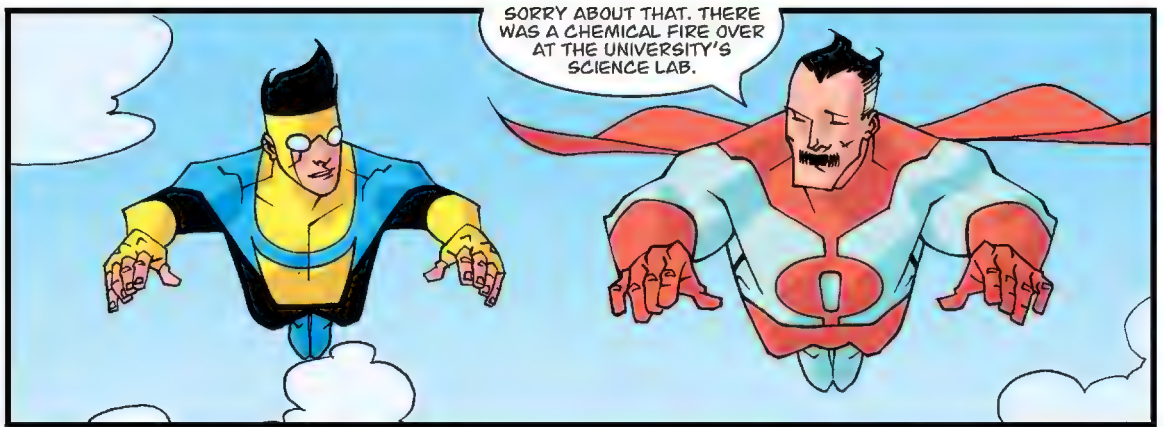
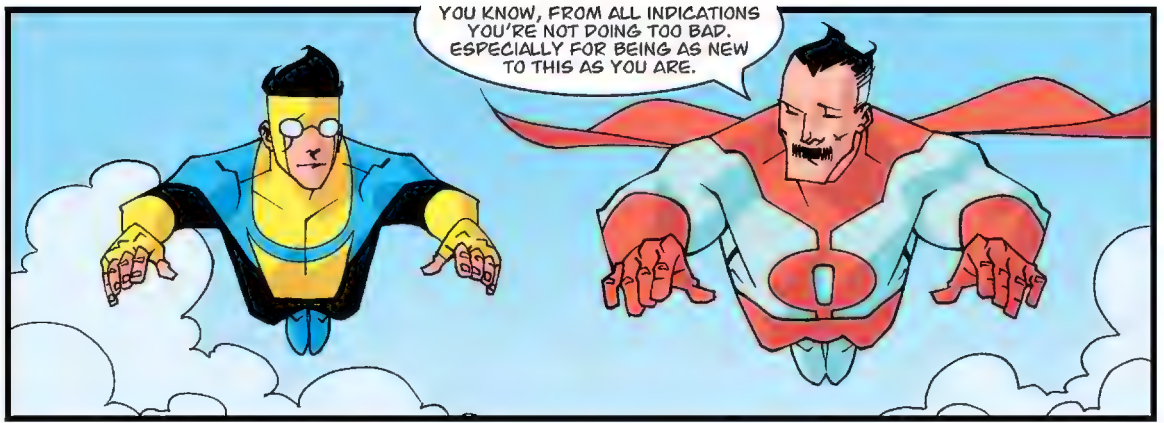
YOU
MIND IF I TAG
ALONG? I THINK
WE'RE ABOUT
DUE FOR A
TEAM-UP.



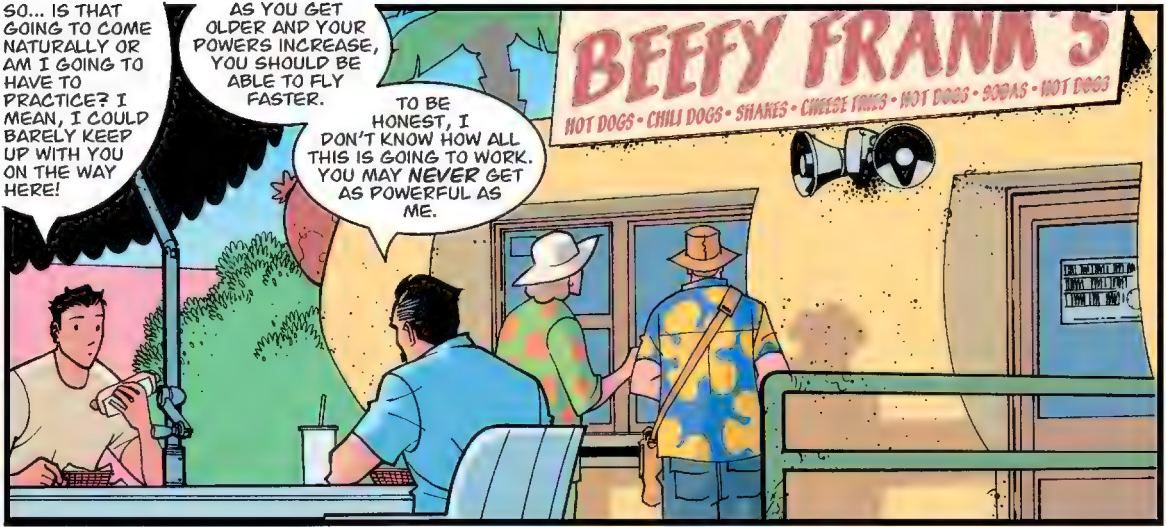
THAT
WOULD BE
GREAT!



HEH.
YOU SAID
"TEAM-UP."







SO... IS THAT GOING TO COME NATURALLY OR AM I GOING TO HAVE TO PRACTICE? I MEAN, I COULD BARELY KEEP UP WITH YOU ON THE WAY HERE!

AS YOU GET OLDER AND YOUR POWERS INCREASE, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FLY FASTER.

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW HOW ALL THIS IS GOING TO WORK. YOU MAY NEVER GET AS POWERFUL AS ME.



I GUESS I COULDN'T COMPLAIN IF THEY NEVER INCREASED AT ALL.



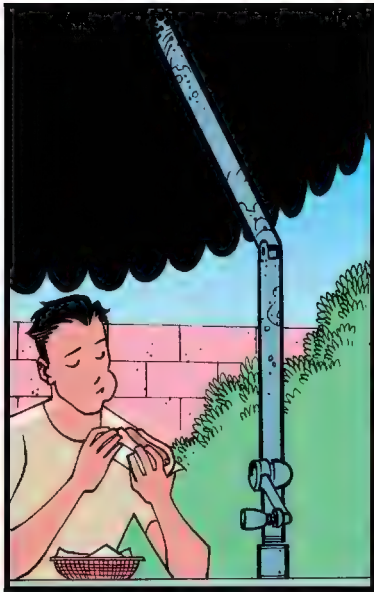
YEAH, AND ANOTHER THING IS THAT YOU DON'T EVEN REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE THE POWERS YOU HAVE, YET. JUST WAIT UNTIL--

HOLD ON...

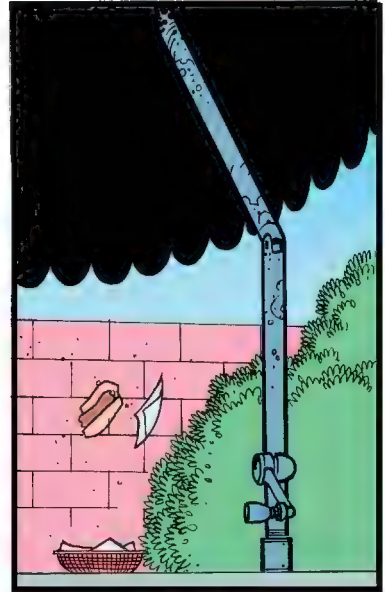


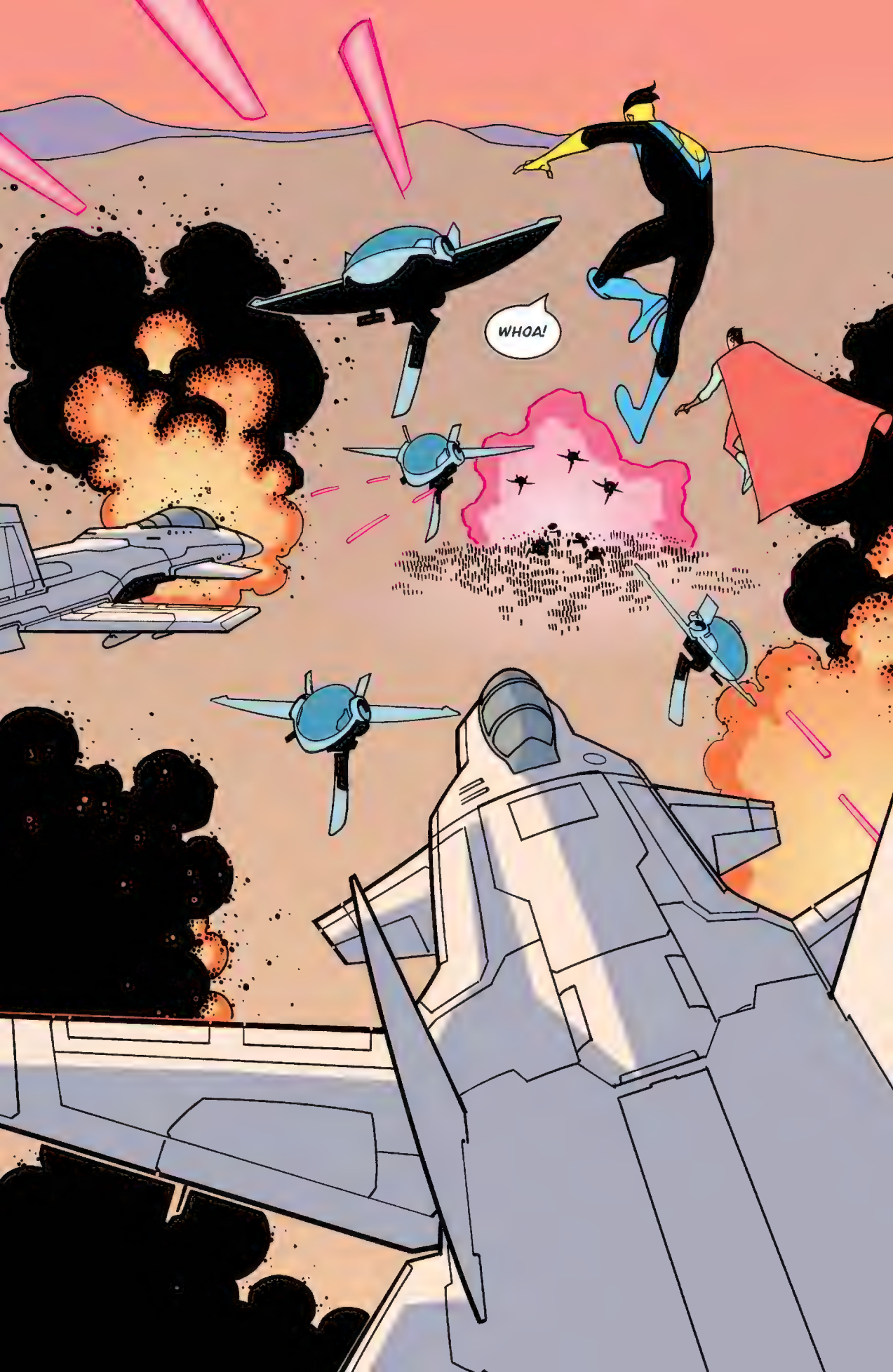
OH, JEEZ!!

I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE!



I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP ON THIS ONE.





NO TIME FOR THAT, SON! LET'S HELP THESE BOYS OUT!



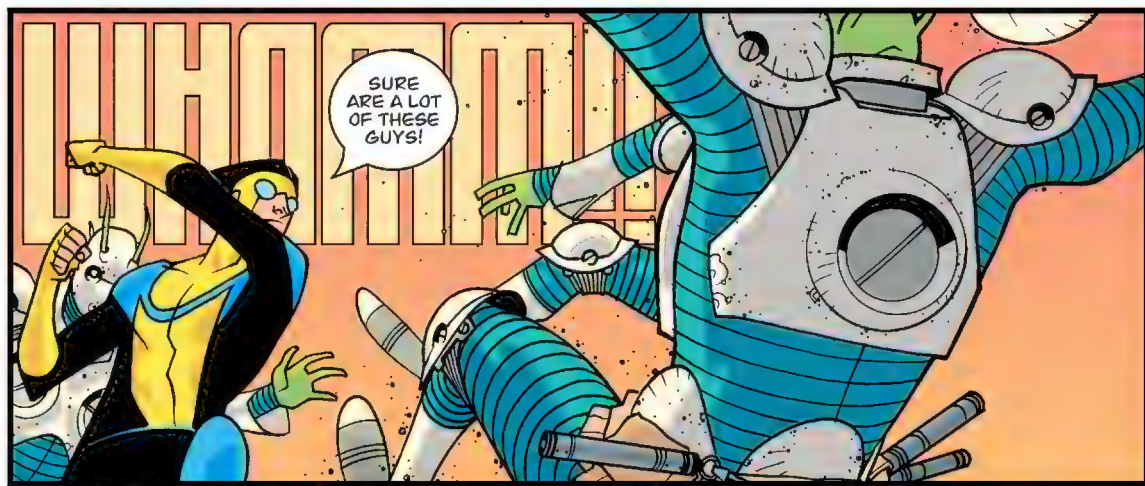
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN!



THAT'S THE SPIRIT!



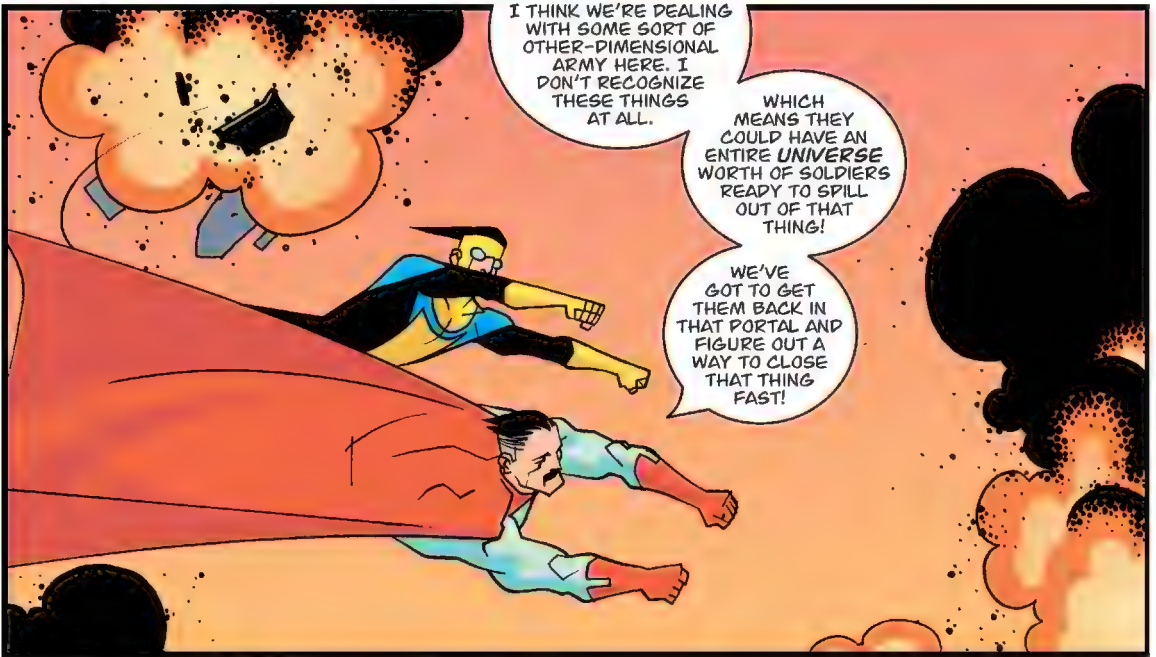
SURE ARE A LOT OF THESE GUYS!

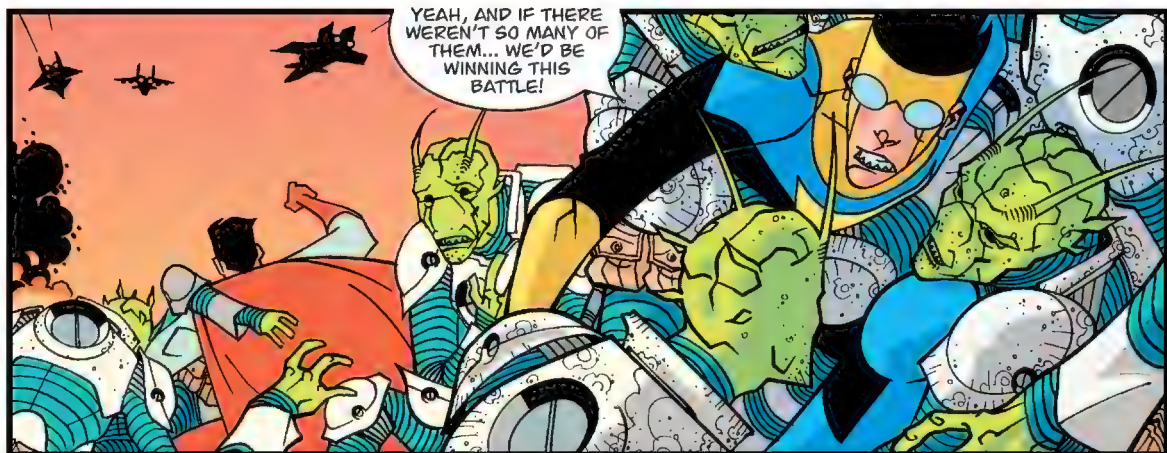
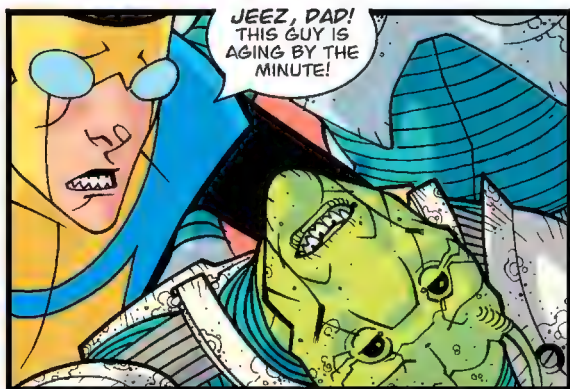
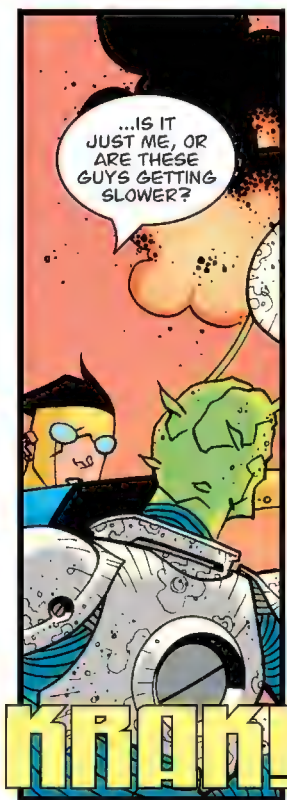


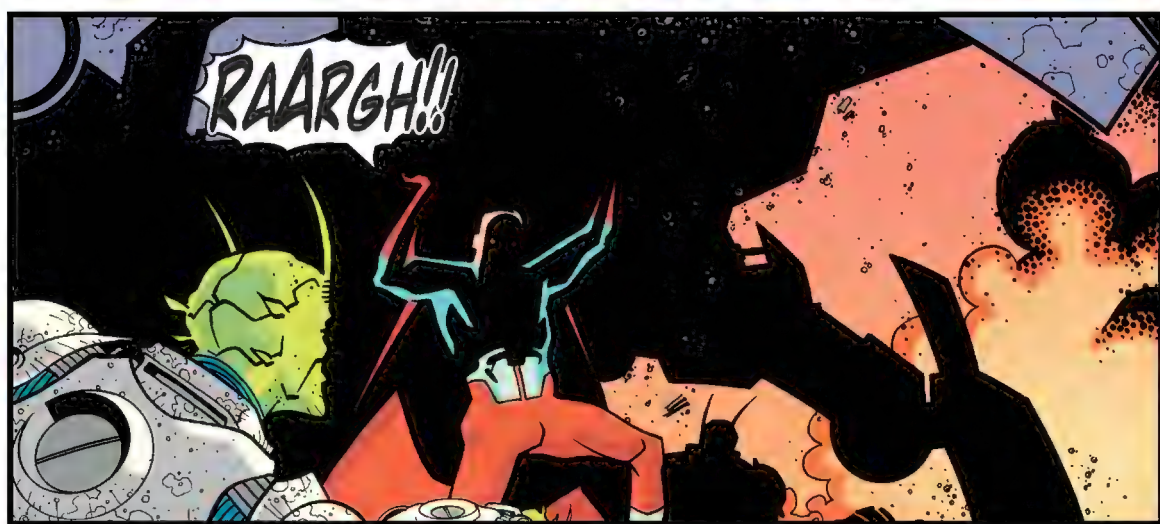
NO KIDDING!

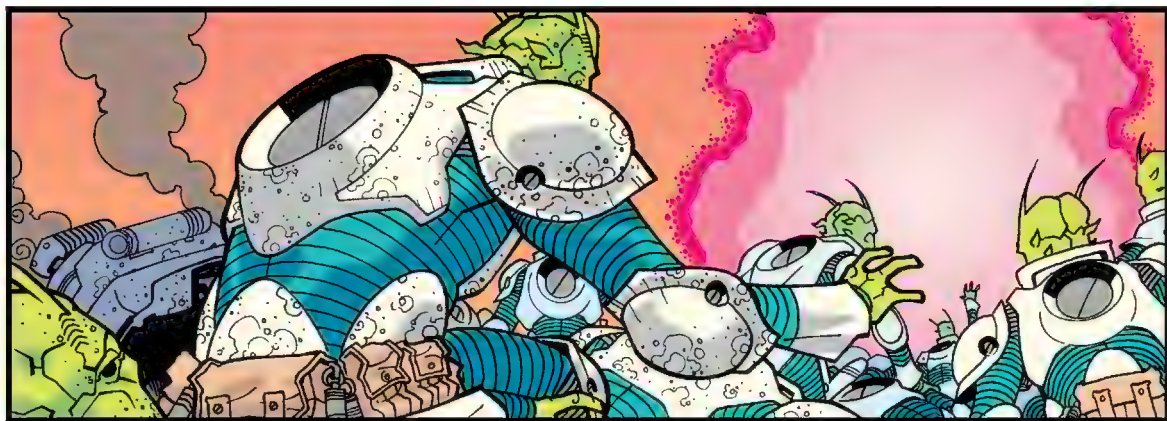
THERE SEEMS TO BE AN ENDLESS STREAM OF THEM COMING OUT OF THAT PORTAL.

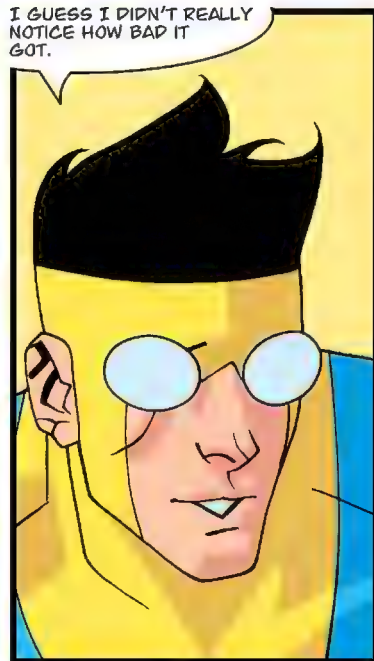
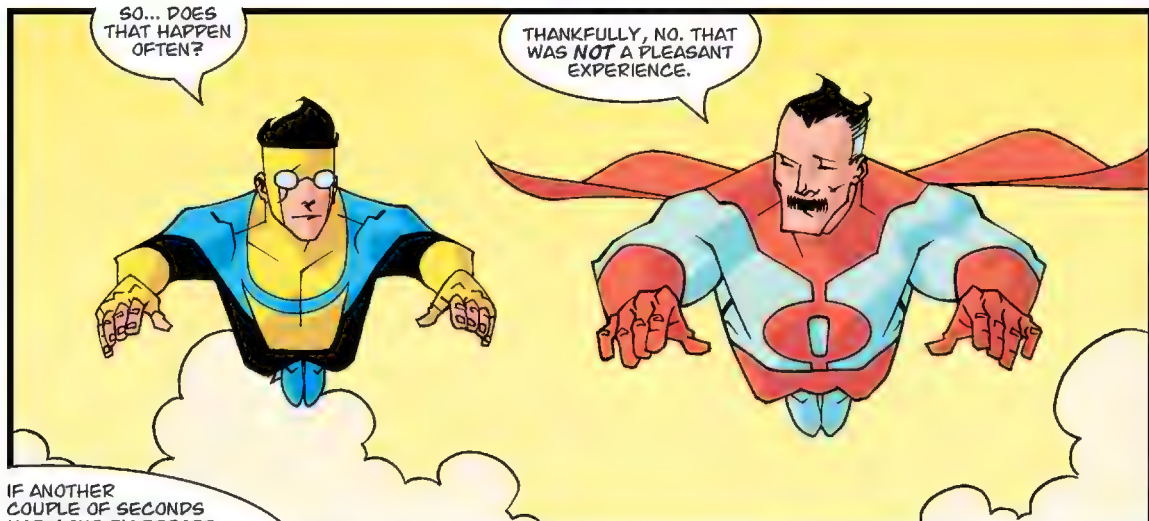


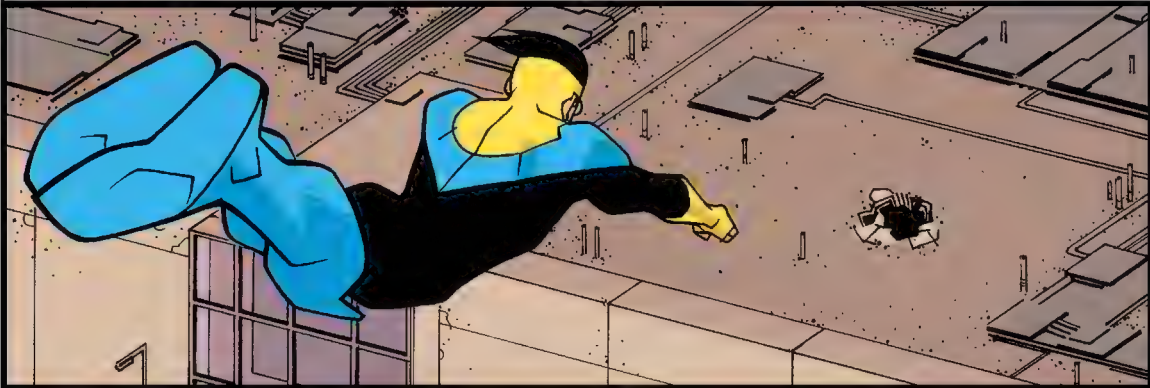


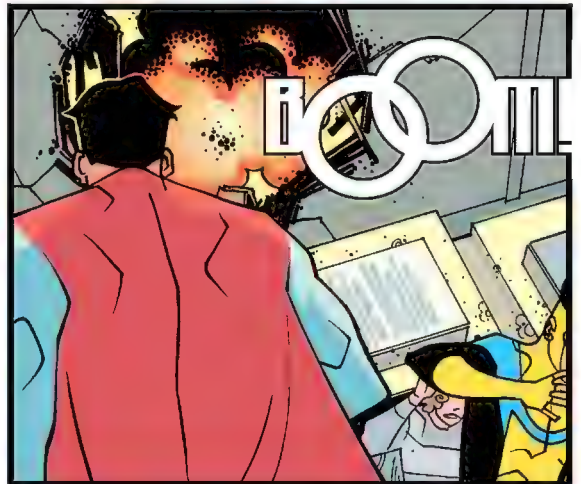
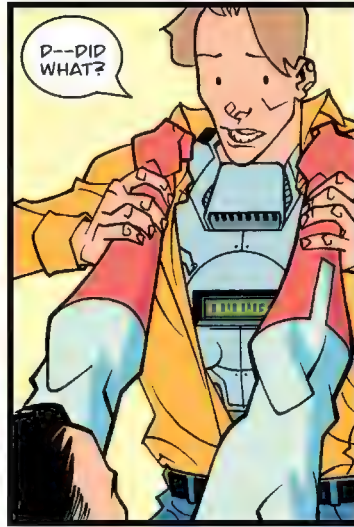


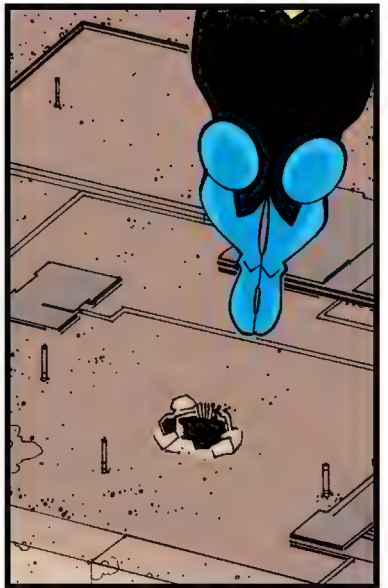
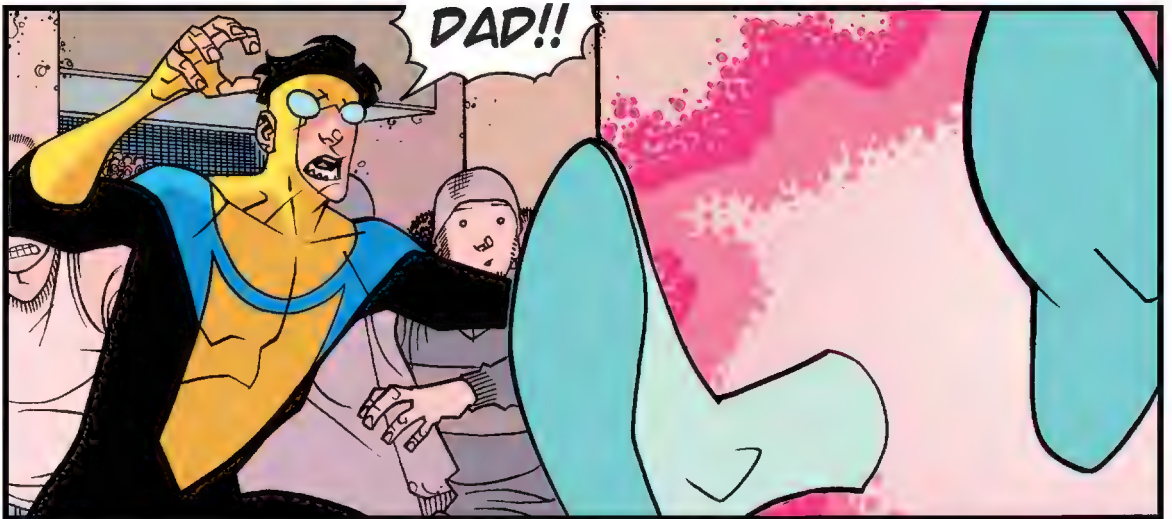






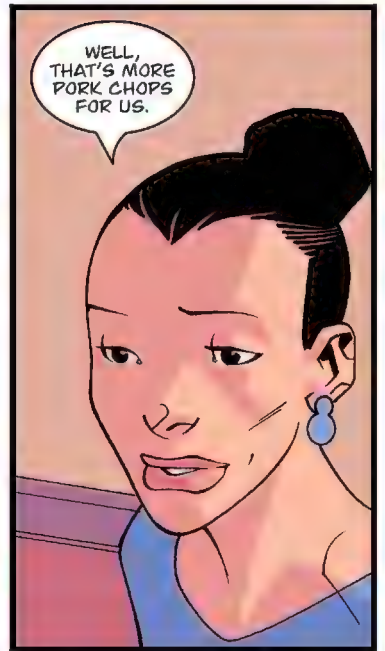






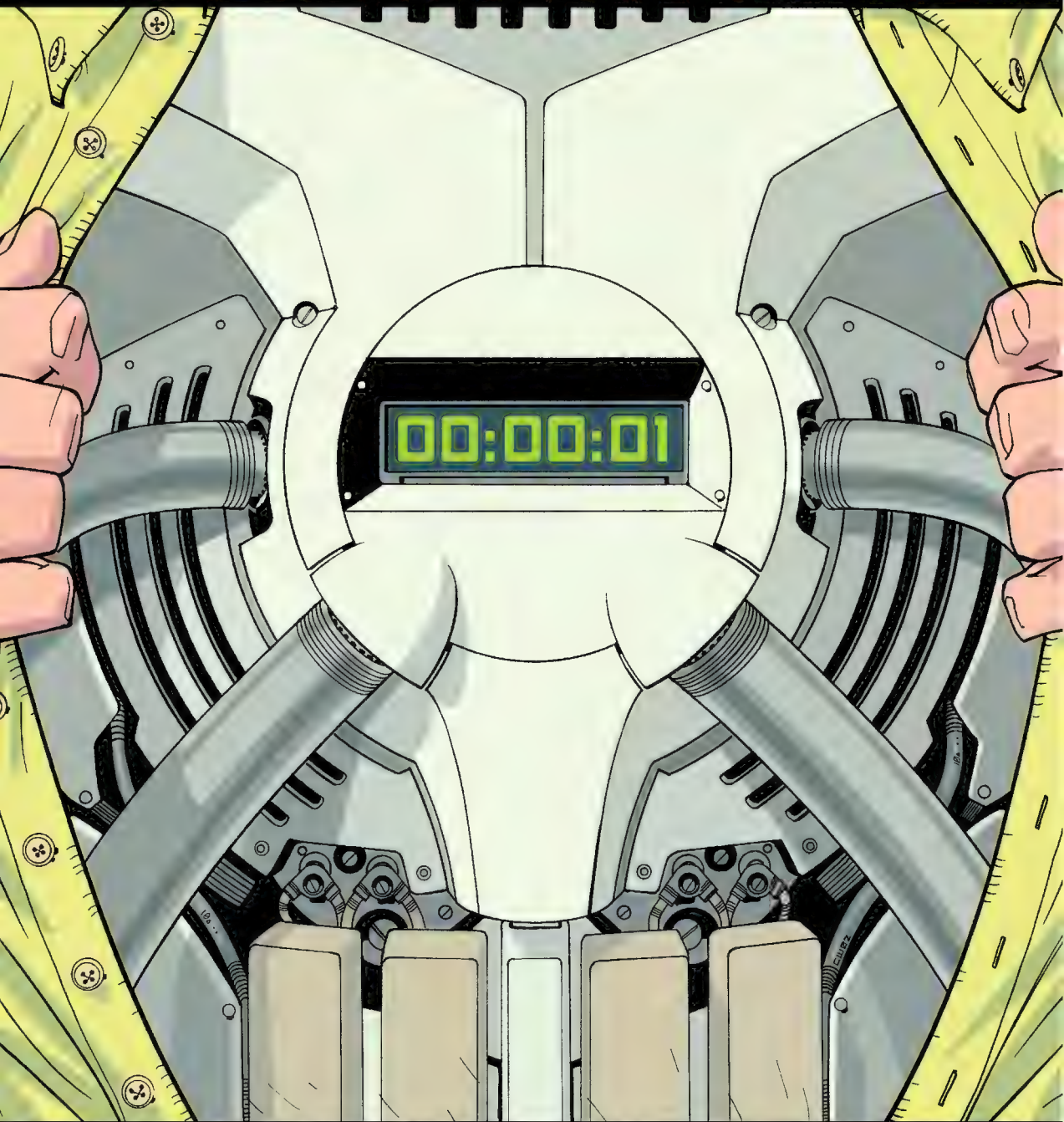


ACTUALLY... DAD WAS SUCKED INTO A PORTAL ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO, I DON'T THINK HE'LL BE HOME TONIGHT.





CHAPTER FOUR



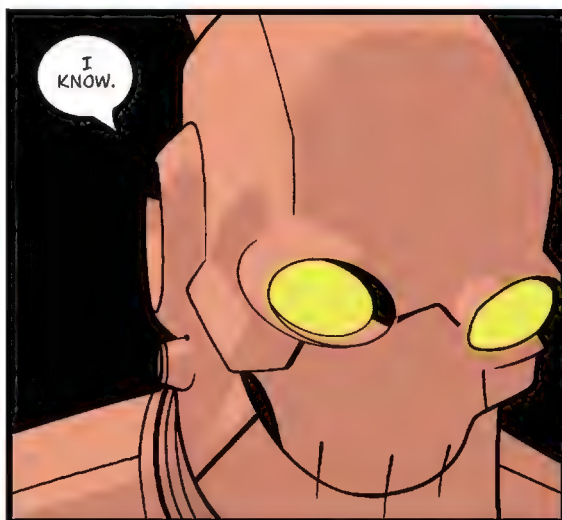
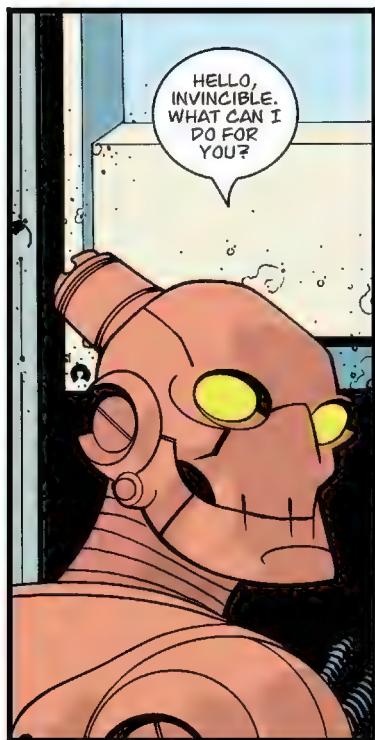
REMARKABLE.

THE GAME
BOX PROCESSOR
IS SO ADVANCED
IT COULD OPERATE
THIS MACHINE FOR
YEARS WITH A
BURNOUT RATE OF
LESS THAN TEN
PERCENT!

HAD WE
NOT STOPPED
THE MAULER
TWINS BEFORE THEY
ACTIVATED THEM.
THEY WOULD HAVE
BEEN NEARLY
UNSTOPPABLE.

FASCINATING.
SIMPLY
FASCINATING.

ROBOT?





I MEAN, IT'S LATE AND ALL BUT I JUST WANTED TO LET HER KNOW SO THAT--

WAIT... WHAT?

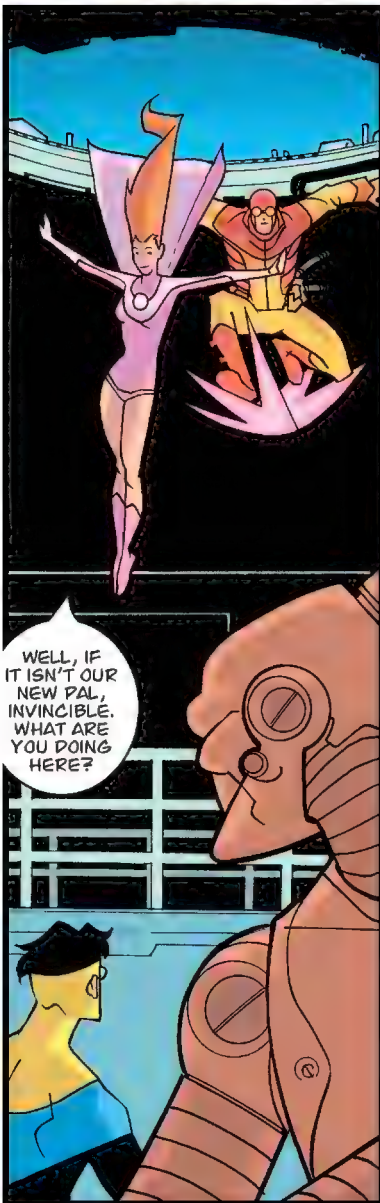
RESIDUE FOUND AT THE BLAST SITES INDICATED THAT THE TIMING MECHANISMS IN ALL THE BOMBS WERE ORGANIC IN NATURE. MORE THAN LIKELY, HUMAN CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS PROVIDE THE CATALYST.

FROM THAT IT WAS MERELY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION TO DETERMINE THE AGE AND RELATION OF THE HUMANS THAT ARE BEING USED AS BOMBS.

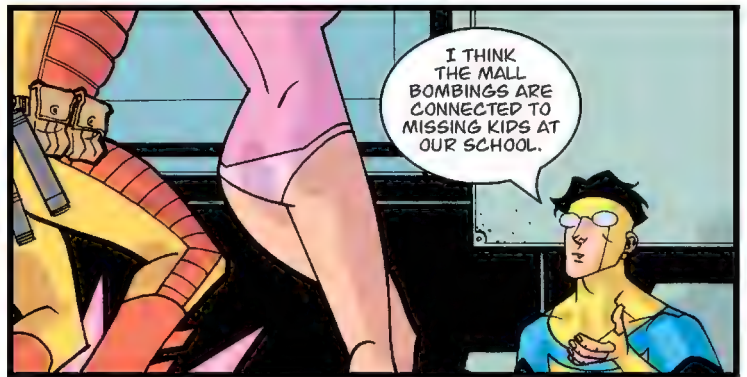
I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE ALL FROM YOUR SCHOOL IN PARTICULAR, BUT I'M SURE I WOULD HAVE... EVENTUALLY.



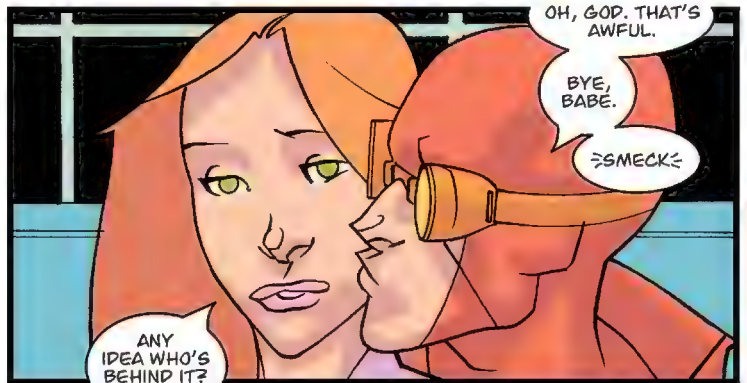
WELL... I'M ONLY SURE THAT THE MOST RECENT ONE WENT TO MY SCHOOL, BUT HE'S ONE OF THE THREE KIDS THAT ARE MISSING.



WELL, IF IT ISN'T OUR NEW PAL, INVINCIBLE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



I THINK THE MALL BOMBINGS ARE CONNECTED TO MISSING KIDS AT OUR SCHOOL.

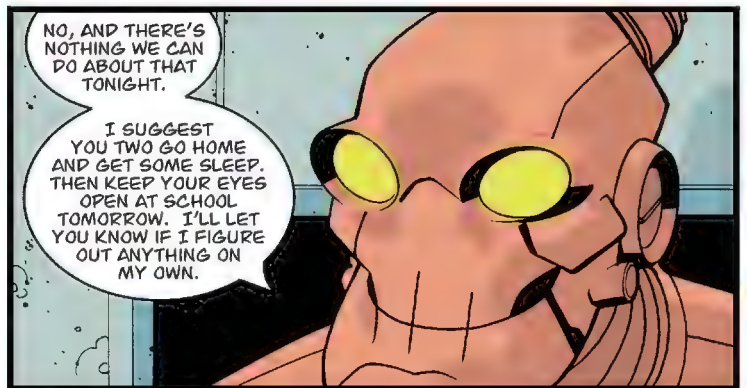


OH, GOD. THAT'S AWFUL.

BYE, BABE.

==SMACK==

ANY IDEA WHO'S BEHIND IT?



NO, AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT TONIGHT.

I SUGGEST YOU TWO GO HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP. THEN KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN AT SCHOOL TOMORROW. I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF I FIGURE OUT ANYTHING ON MY OWN.



MOM?

WHAT
ARE YOU
STILL DOING
UP?

AREN'T I ALLOWED TO WATCH
SOME LATE NIGHT TV IN MY
OWN HOUSE? BESIDES, I
SHOULD BE ASKING YOU
THE SAME QUESTION,
YOUNG MAN.



WHEN YOU
LEFT AFTER DINNER
YOU SAID YOU'D ONLY
BE A FEW MINUTES. JUST
BECAUSE YOU'RE WEARING
TIGHTS DOESN'T MEAN YOU
DON'T HAVE A CURFEW.

I GUESS I JUST
GOT TIED UP AT
THE TEEN TEAM'S
PLACE...



UM...

YOU'RE
NOT WORRYING
ABOUT DAD,
ARE YOU?

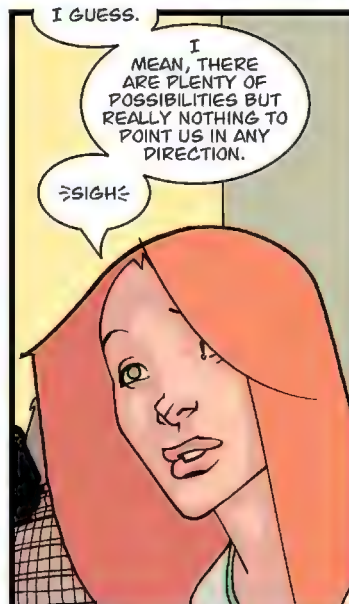
I CAN SIT HERE AND WATCH HIM
BATTLE HUNDRED-FOOT DRAGONS
ON TV ALL DAY LONG, BUT FOR
SOME REASON... EVERY TIME
HE'S IN ANOTHER DIMENSION...
I CAN'T HELP BUT ASSUME
THE WORST.

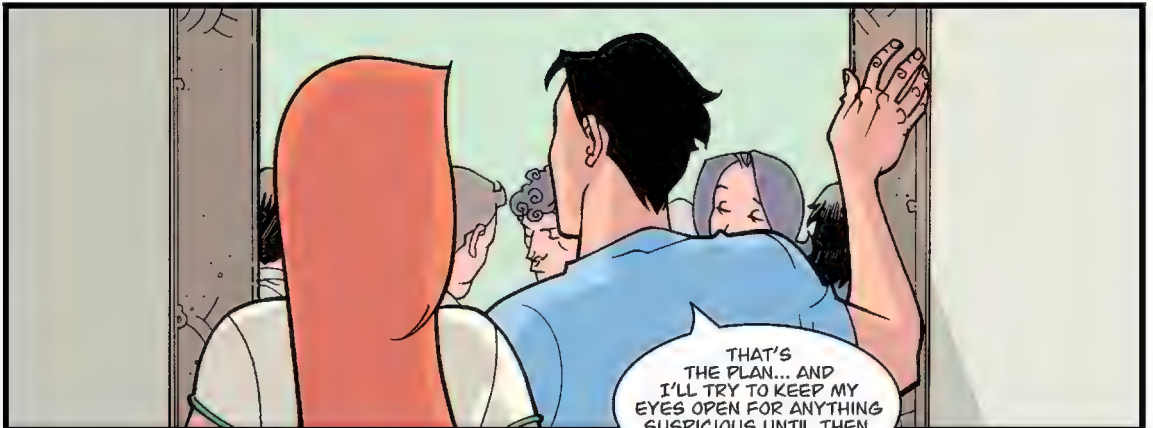
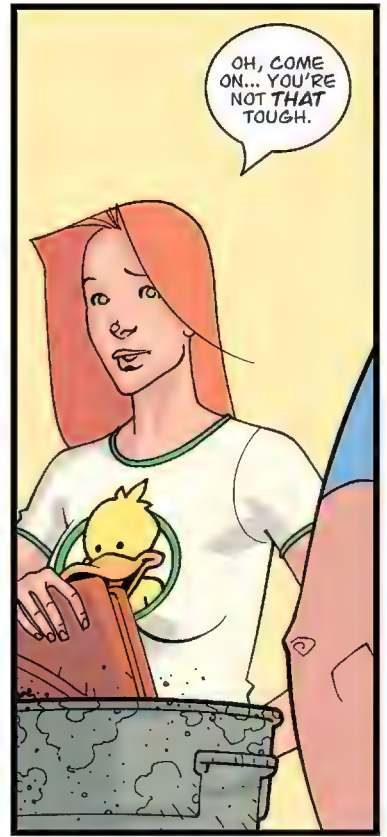


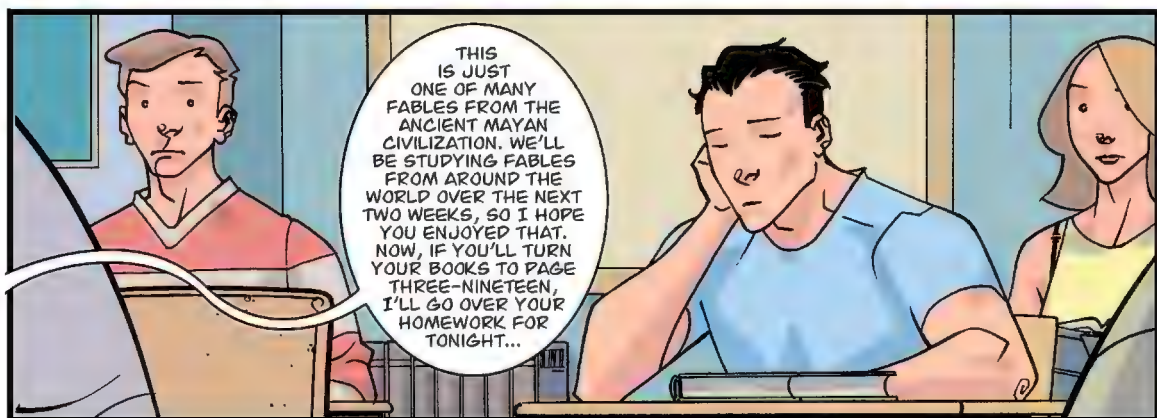
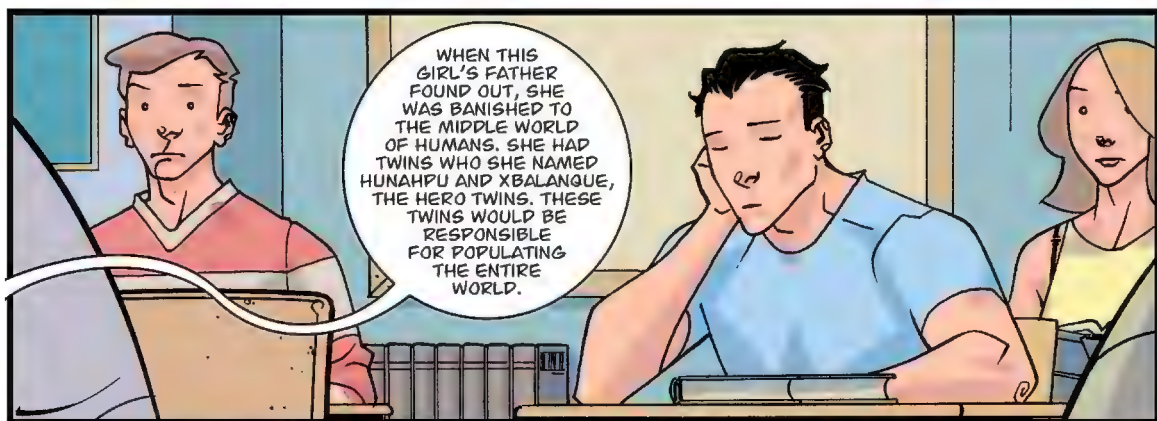
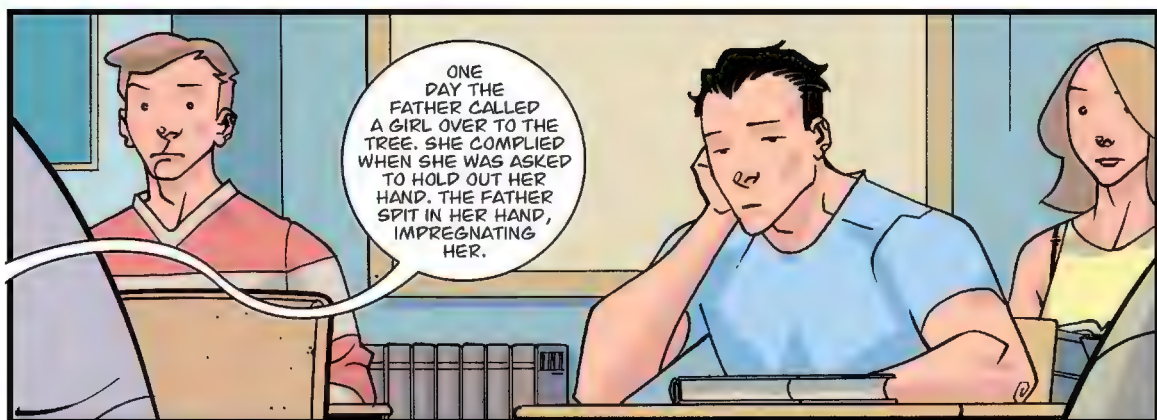
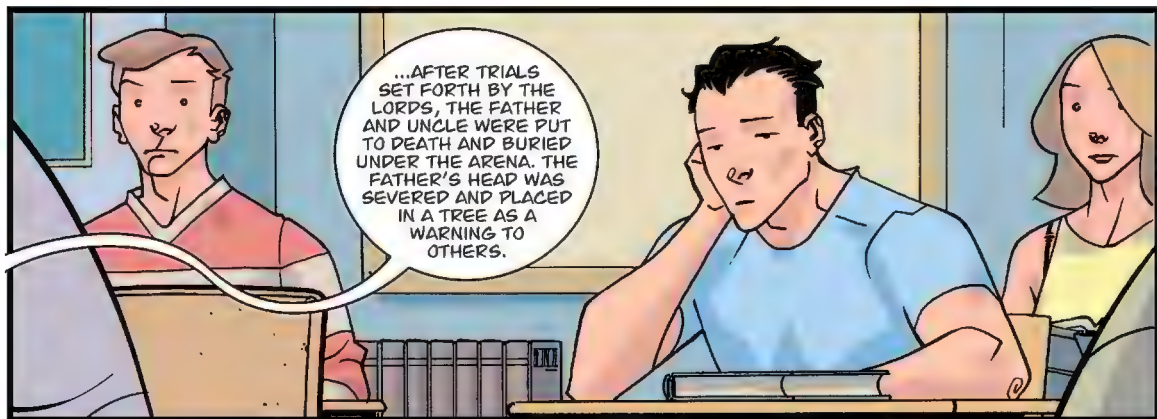
I JUST NEVER KNOW WHAT TO THINK... THERE'S
NO WAY OF TELLING HOW LONG HE'LL BE GONE.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE...
AND HE WAS GONE FOR ALMOST SIX
MONTHS? HE MISSED YOUR
BIRTHDAY THAT
YEAR.

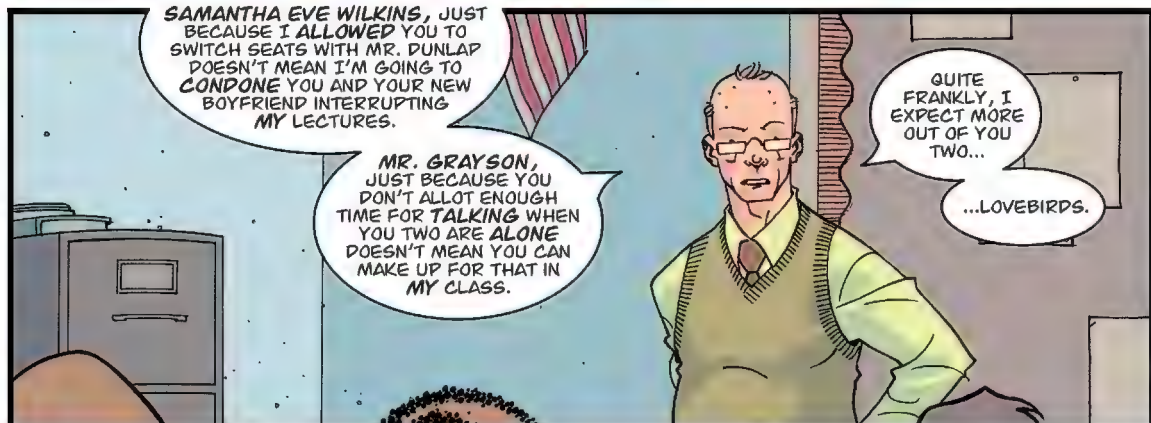
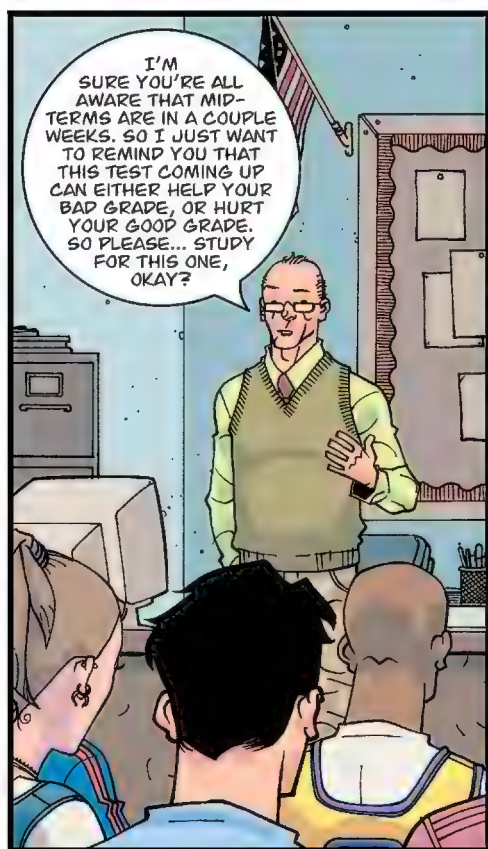


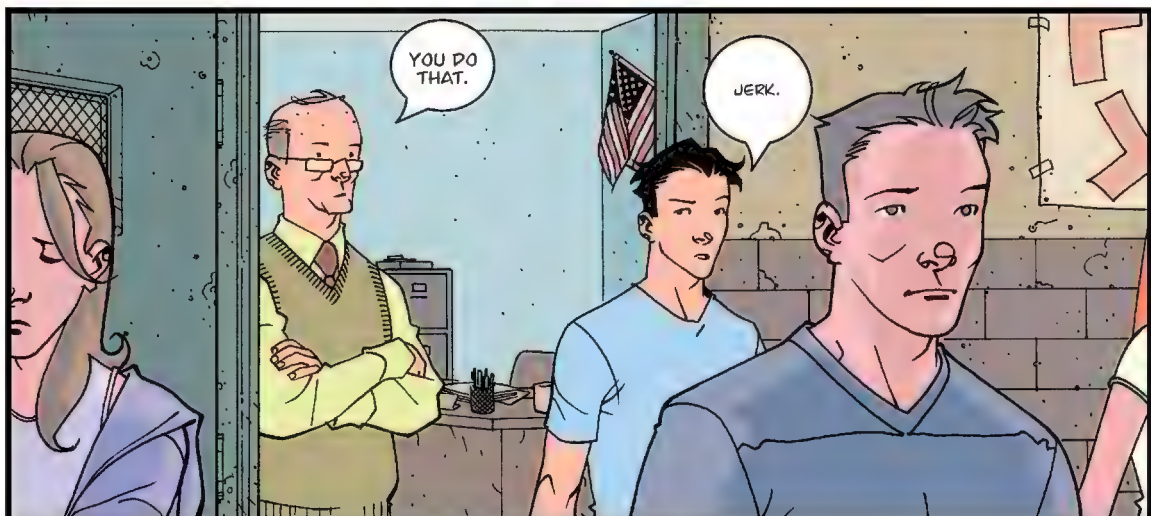
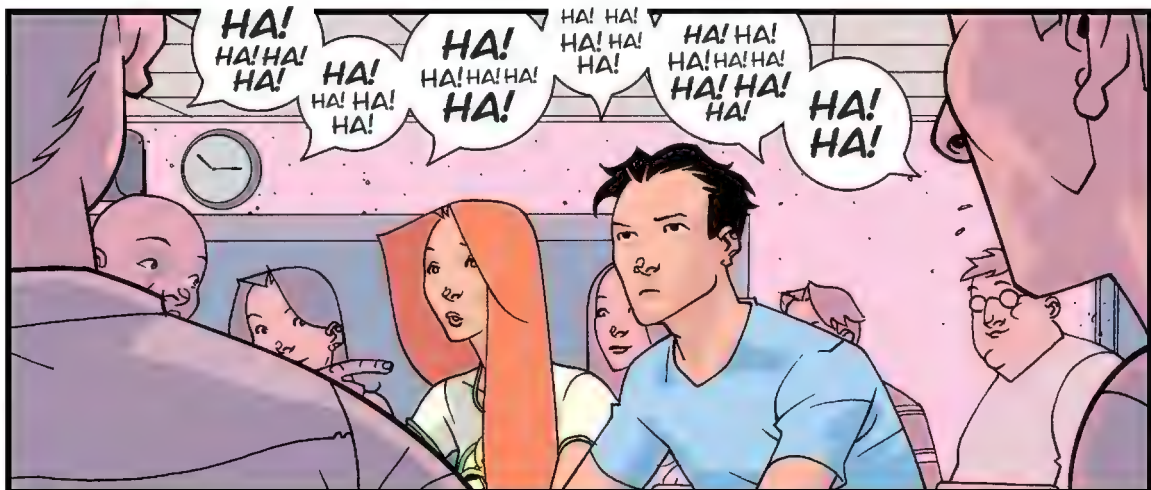
IT'S
GOING TO
BE OKAY, MOM.
DON'T WORRY
ABOUT DAD.
HE'LL BE
BACK...

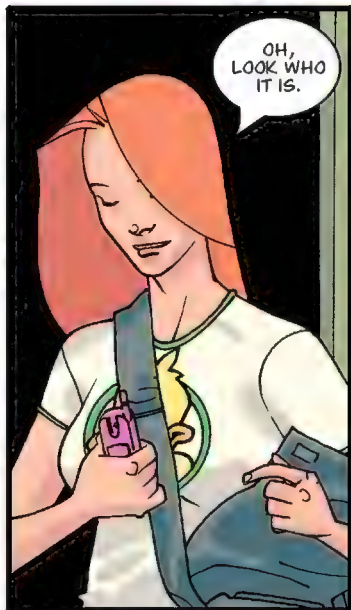


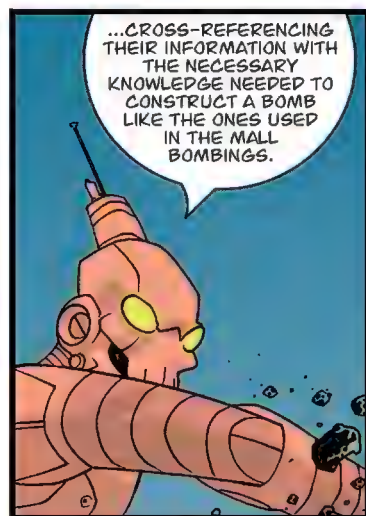
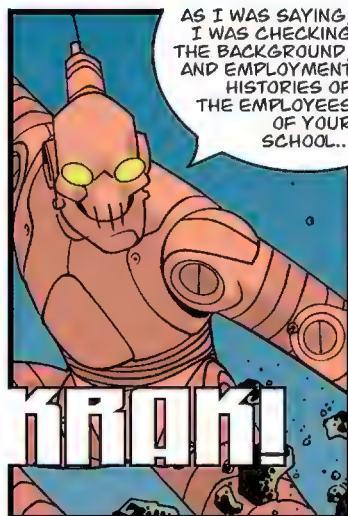


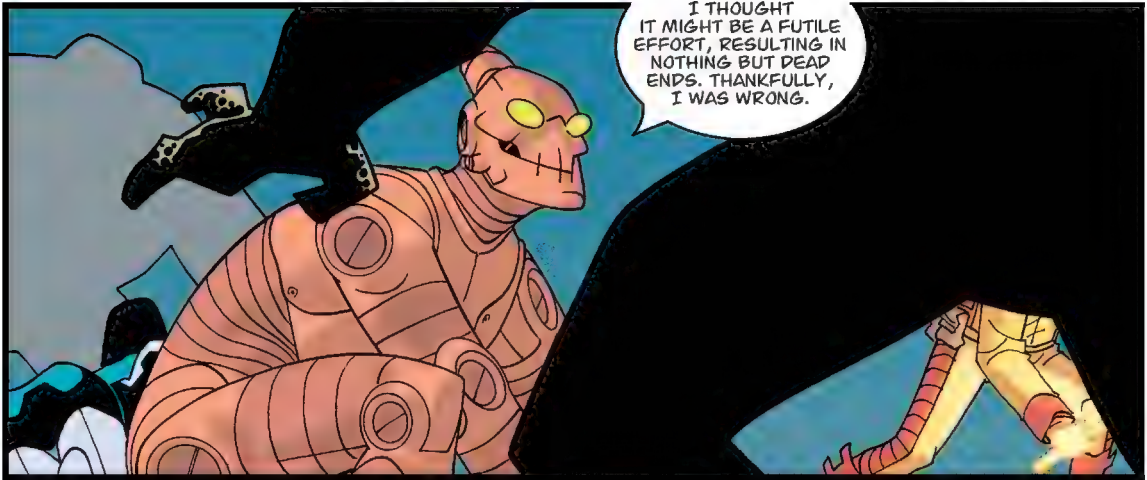




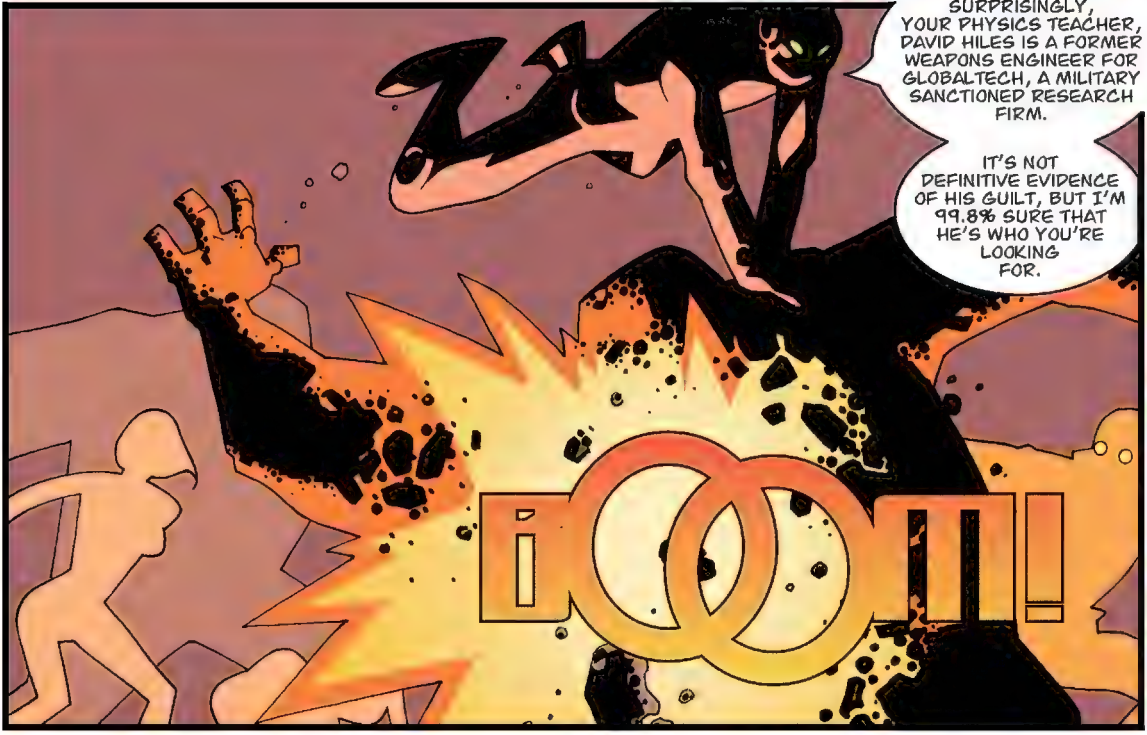








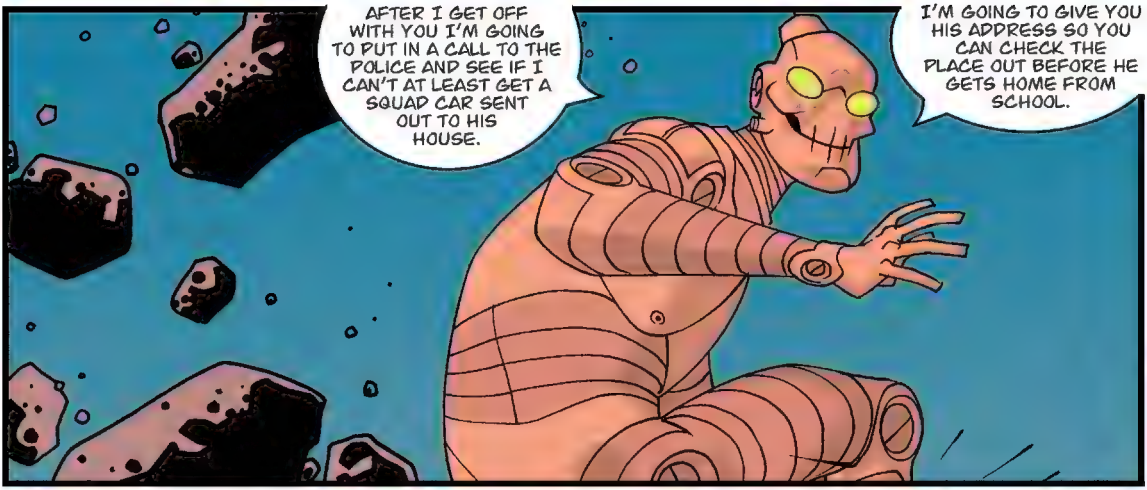
I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A FUTILE EFFORT, RESULTING IN NOTHING BUT DEAD ENDS. THANKFULLY, I WAS WRONG.



SURPRISINGLY, YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, DAVID HILES IS A FORMER WEAPONS ENGINEER FOR GLOBALTECH, A MILITARY SANCTIONED RESEARCH FIRM.

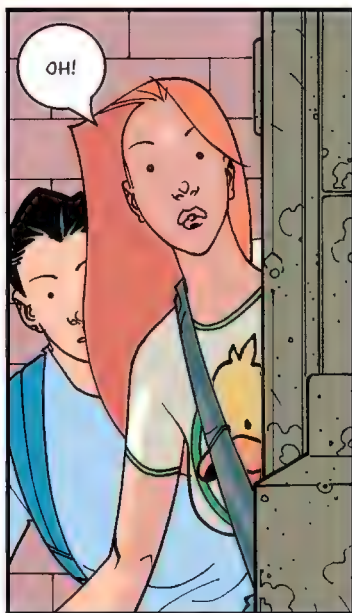
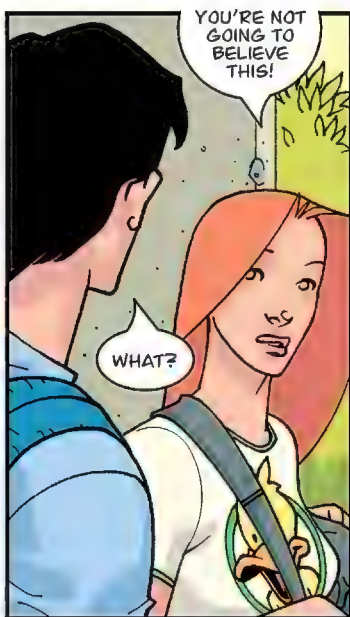
IT'S NOT DEFINITIVE EVIDENCE OF HIS GUILT, BUT I'M 99.8% SURE THAT HE'S WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

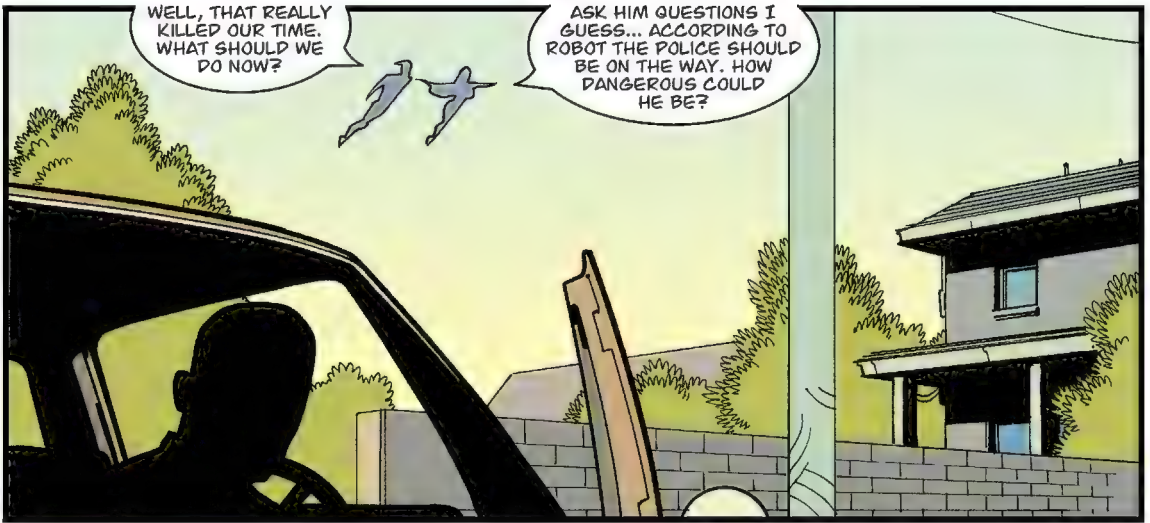
BOOM!



AFTER I GET OFF WITH YOU I'M GOING TO PUT IN A CALL TO THE POLICE AND SEE IF I CAN'T AT LEAST GET A SQUAD CAR SENT OUT TO HIS HOUSE.

I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU HIS ADDRESS SO YOU CAN CHECK THE PLACE OUT BEFORE HE GETS HOME FROM SCHOOL.





WELL, THAT REALLY
KILLED OUR TIME.
WHAT SHOULD WE
DO NOW?

ASK HIM QUESTIONS I
GUESS... ACCORDING TO
ROBOT THE POLICE SHOULD
BE ON THE WAY. HOW
DANGEROUS COULD
HE BE?



HOLD IT
RIGHT THERE,
SIR!



I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET CAUGHT
QUITE THIS EARLY, AND I
CERTAINLY EXPECTED... MORE
CONVENTIONAL AUTHORITIES
WHEN THE TIME DID
COME...



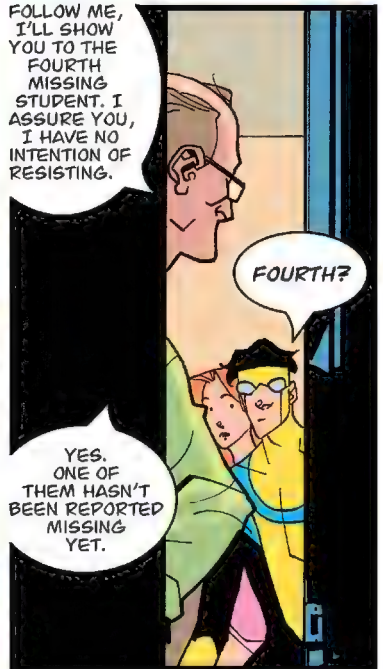
VERY WELL.
MARK, SAMANTHA...
PLEASE, DO COME
INSIDE.



HOW DID
YOU--?



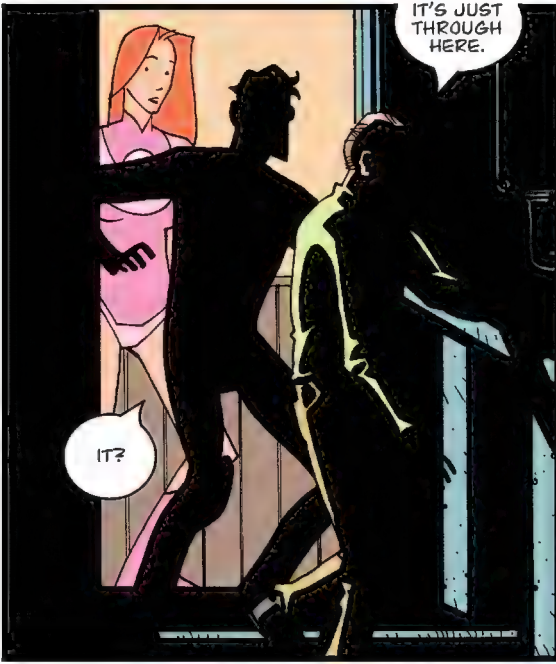
ARE YOU
KIDDING ME?
YOU'RE NOT
EVEN WEARING
A MASK.



FOLLOW ME,
I'LL SHOW
YOU TO THE
FOURTH
MISSING
STUDENT. I
ASSURE YOU,
I HAVE NO
INTENTION OF
RESISTING.

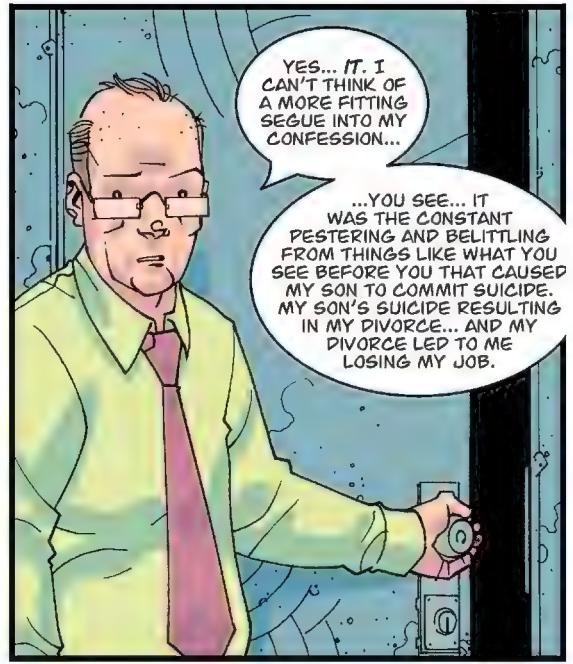
FOURTH?

YES.
ONE OF
THEM HASN'T
BEEN REPORTED
MISSING
YET.



IT'S JUST
THROUGH
HERE.

IT?



YES... IT. I
CAN'T THINK OF
A MORE FITTING
SEGUE INTO MY
CONFESSION...

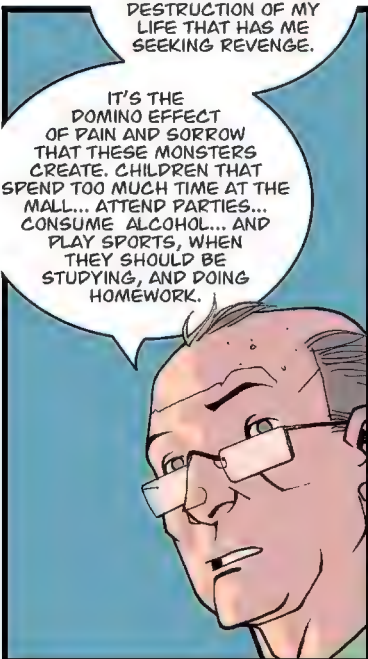
...YOU SEE... IT
WAS THE CONSTANT
PESTERING AND BELITTLING
FROM THINGS LIKE WHAT YOU
SEE BEFORE YOU THAT CAUSED
MY SON TO COMMIT SUICIDE.
MY SON'S SUICIDE RESULTING
IN MY DIVORCE... AND MY
DIVORCE LED TO ME
LOSING MY JOB.



DEREK!

I'LL
SPARE YOU
THE BORING
DETAILS.

IT'S NOT THE
DEATH OF MY SON
I'M AVENGING... THAT
WOULD BE FAR TOO
CLICHÉ. NO... IT'S THE
DESTRUCTION OF MY
LIFE THAT HAS ME
SEEKING REVENGE.



IT'S THE
DOMINO EFFECT
OF PAIN AND SORROW
THAT THESE MONSTERS
CREATE. CHILDREN THAT
SPEND TOO MUCH TIME AT THE
MALL... ATTEND PARTIES...
CONSUME ALCOHOL... AND
PLAY SPORTS, WHEN
THEY SHOULD BE
STUDYING, AND DOING
HOMEWORK.

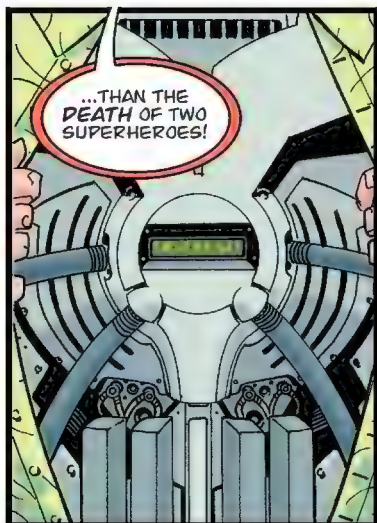


WHAT
DID YOU DO
TO HIM?

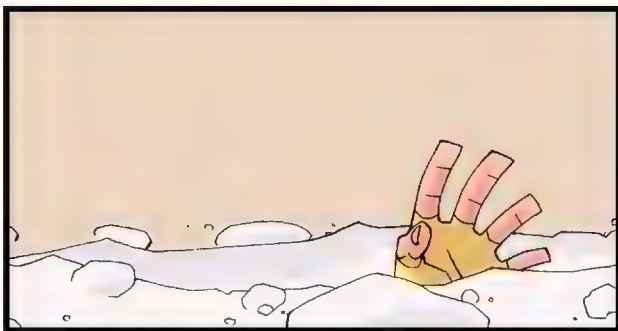


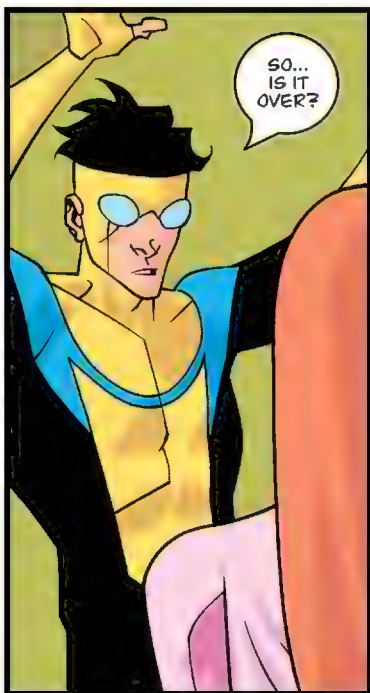
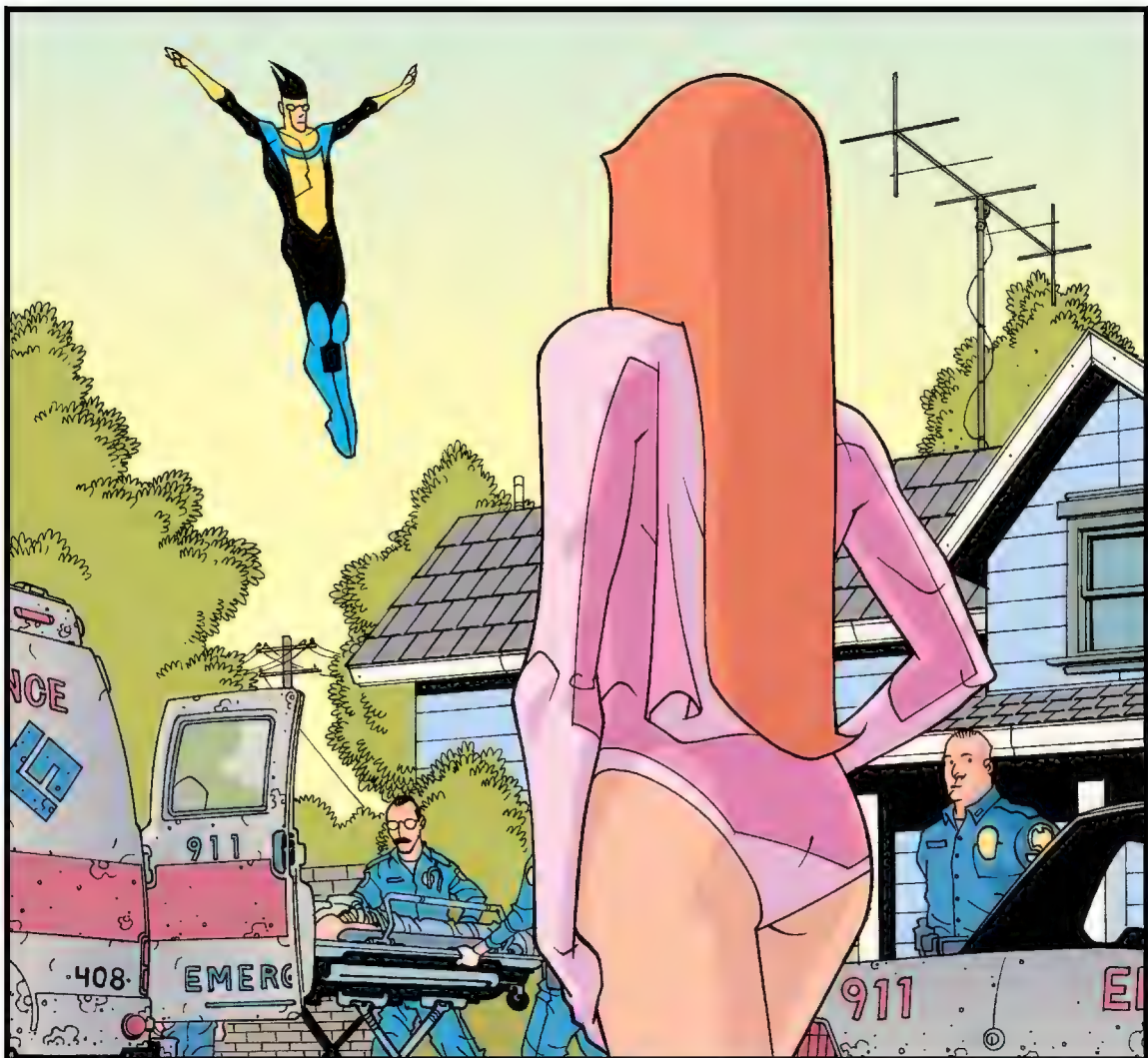
WHAT I DID
TO ALL OF THEM.
I TURNED HIM INTO
A LIVING BOMB, AN
INSTRUMENT WITH
WHICH TO ENACT MY
REVENGE... MY CRUSADE
TO END THE PAIN AND
SORROW CAUSED BY
THESE... "POPULAR"
KIDS...

...AND I
CAN'T THINK
OF A MORE
APPROPRIATE
END TO MY
CRUSADE...

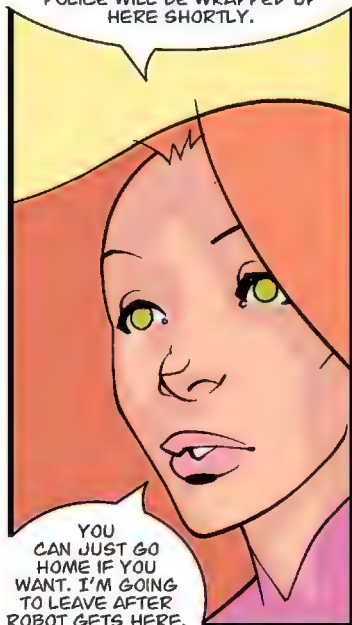


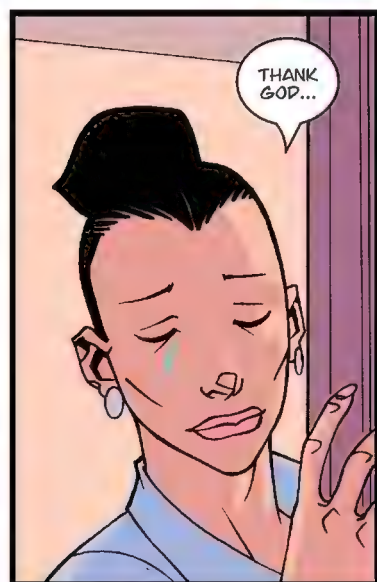
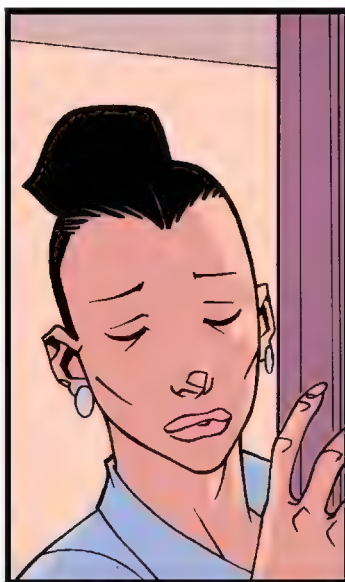
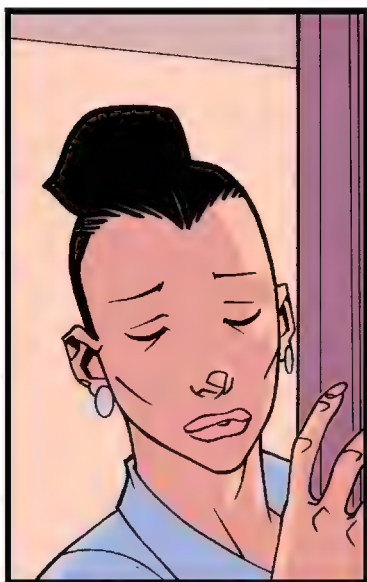
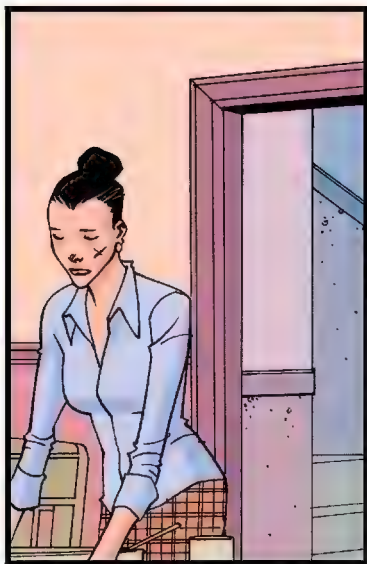
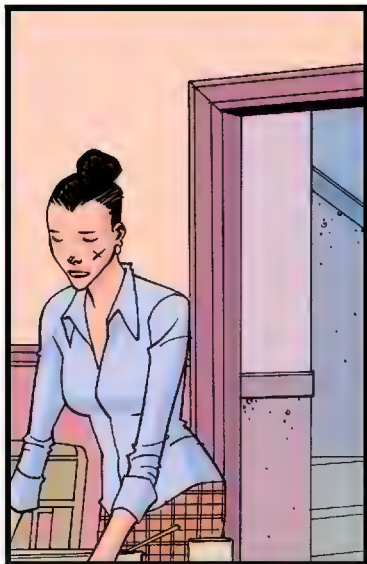


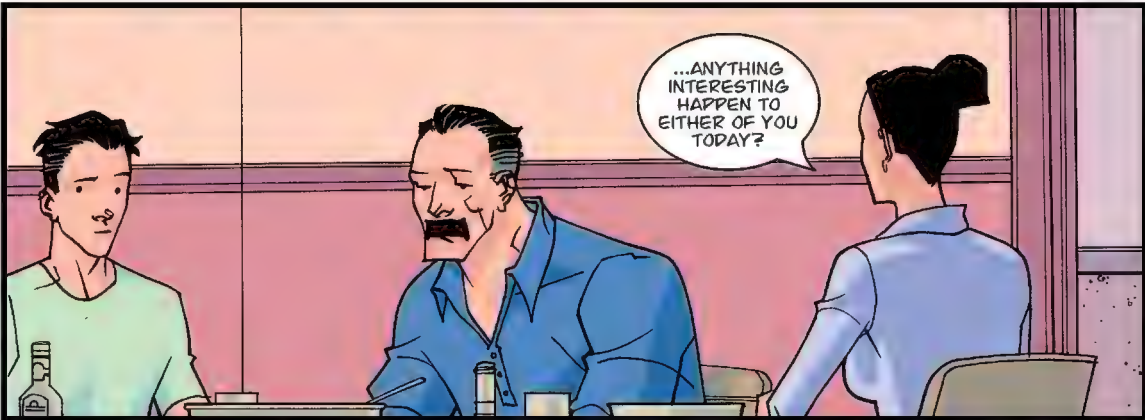
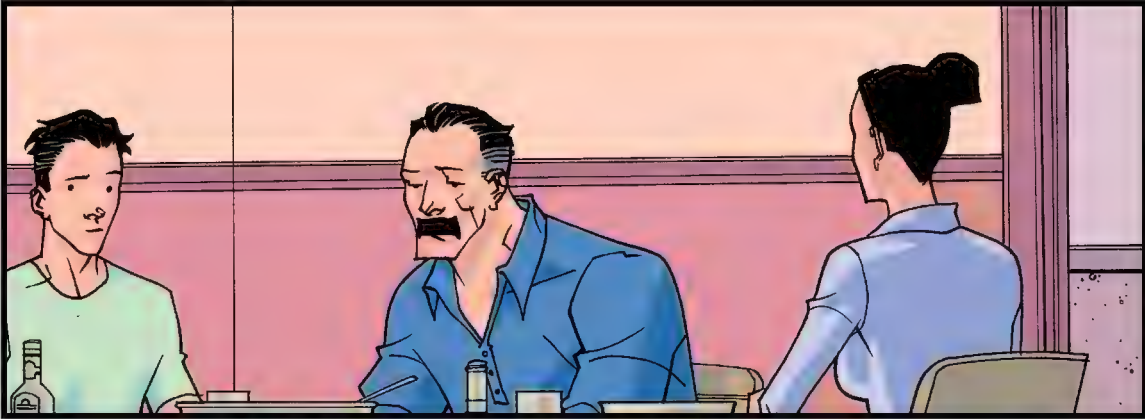


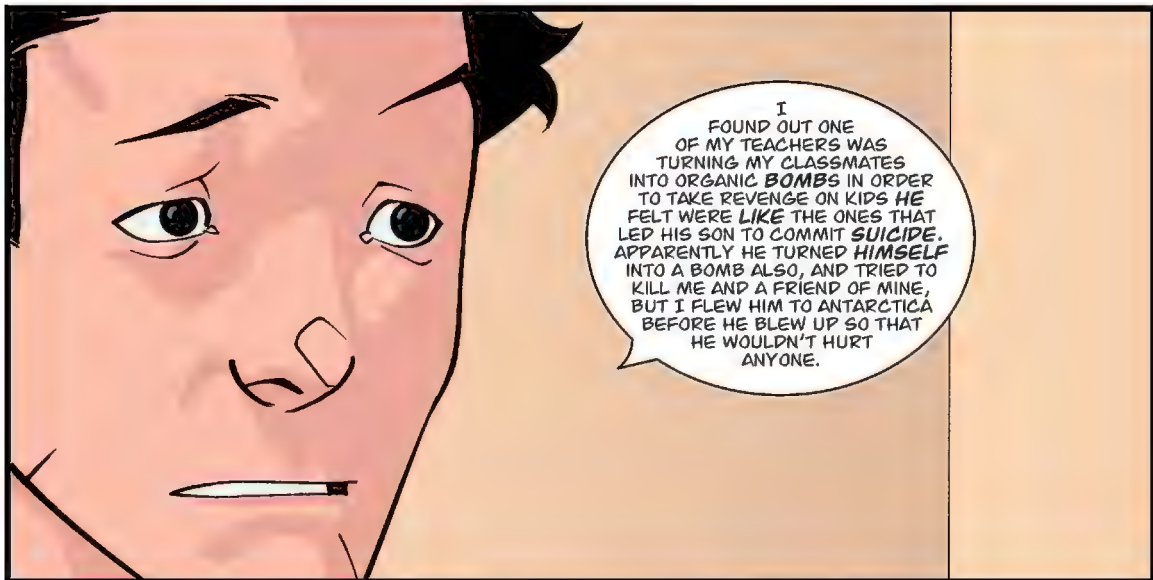


ROBOT IS COMING BY TO DO A SWEEP
OF THE HOUSE TO CHECK FOR
ANYTHING DANGEROUS. I THINK THE
POLICE WILL BE WRAPPED UP
HERE SHORTLY.

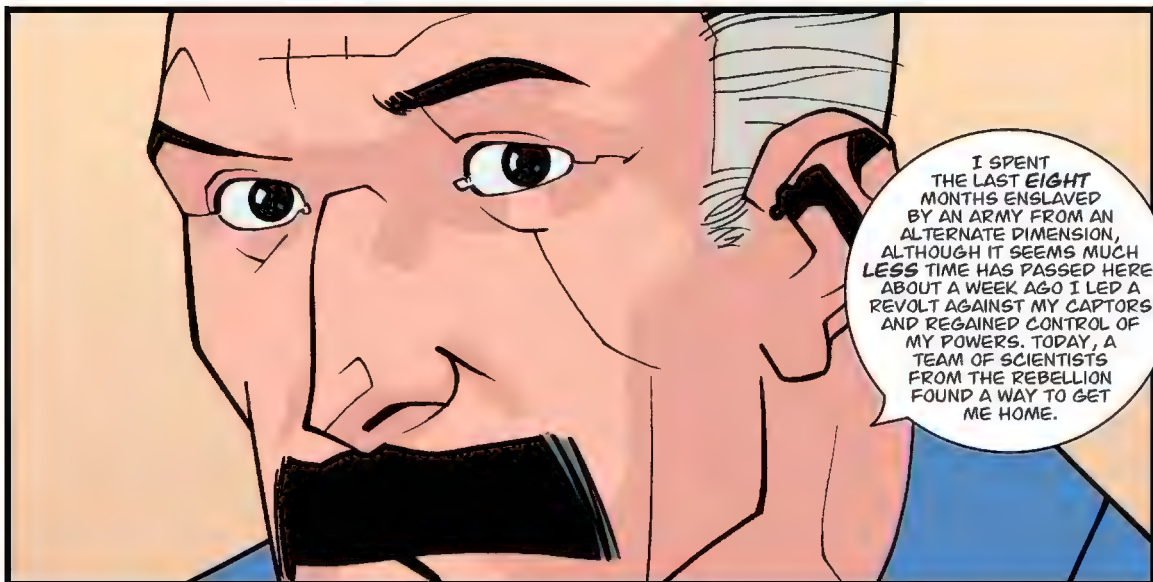








I
FOUND OUT ONE
OF MY TEACHERS WAS
TURNING MY CLASSMATES
INTO ORGANIC **BOMBS** IN ORDER
TO TAKE REVENGE ON KIDS HE
FELT WERE **LIKE** THE ONES THAT
LED HIS SON TO COMMIT **SUICIDE**.
APPARENTLY HE TURNED **HIMSELF**
INTO A BOMB ALSO, AND TRIED TO
KILL ME AND A FRIEND OF MINE,
BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA
BEFORE HE BLEW UP SO THAT
HE WOULDN'T HURT
ANYONE.



I SPENT
THE LAST **EIGHT**
MONTHS ENSLAVED
BY AN ARMY FROM AN
ALTERNATE DIMENSION,
ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS MUCH
LESS TIME HAS PASSED HERE.
ABOUT A WEEK AGO I LED A
REVOLT AGAINST MY CAPTORS
AND REGAINED CONTROL OF
MY POWERS. TODAY, A
TEAM OF SCIENTISTS
FROM THE REBELLION
FOUND A WAY TO GET
ME HOME.



THAT'S
NICE. WHO'S
READY FOR
DESSERT?



UNUSED COVERS

We went through a lot of versions of the first issue's cover. It all started out with a sketch I did of Mark flying up towards us with two bank robbers. Cory did the sketch below based on that, and it was pointed out that he'd look goofy if he smiled, and that he was flying from right to left. Since we read from left to right things flow better in comics if they MOVE in that direction too. Both of these problems were my fault. So Cory took over and came up with the second sketch you see... doesn't Mark look serious? The cover was finished up and sent to Val Staples to color, this was before Bill Crabtree came on board. Val did a hell of a job and I've always loved the way his stuff looks on Cory's work but there was a problem... the colors were WRONG!! And Jim Valentino said the overly blue background made him want to go to sleep... and this is the LAST thing we want to do to potential readers.

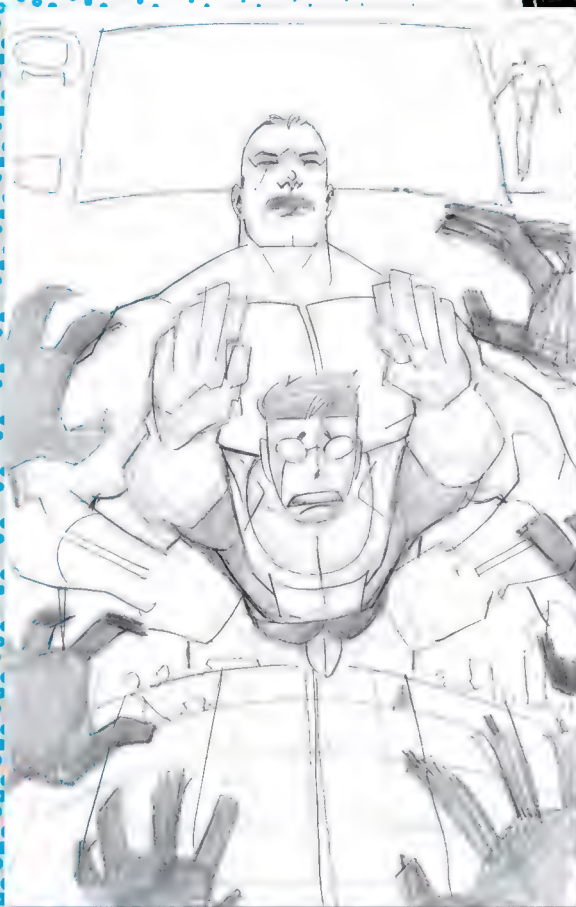


Val was swamped at this time, trying to launch that nifty *Masters of the Universe* comic so with his approval, Cory and I got our good pal Tony Moore to alter Val's version, changing the background and making the white on the costume yellow.

Later Cory and I decided that we weren't too keen on Mark's serious facial expression, so Cory altered the line art to make him smile just a little... and I requested some money be thrown in the air to play up the bank robbing angle. Around this time, young Bill Crabtree had come aboard. So he colored the version seen on the opposite page.



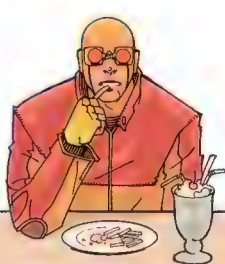
After all the initial promotion was out of the way... it was brought to our attention by Image that the original cover wasn't as strong as it could be and in their opinion would hurt our sales. That's not the smartest thing to do, so Cory immediately started burning the midnight oil trying to come up with something new. My pal Erik Larsen even threw his hat into the ring with the sketch below, and we were going to use it until Jim Valentino remembered a promo image Cory had done and thought it would make the perfect cover. Cory then took that image and came up with a new background for it. It was decided that reading the paper and washing dishes weren't very exciting, Jim suggested expanding the cracked wall panel that's behind Mark into the entire background... and thus, a cover was born.



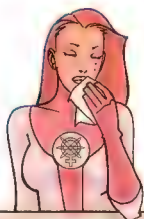


PROMOTIONAL ART

Cory and I really wanted to have a Previews ad that was more than just a cover, so we did the page that you see on the opposite page, and all the illos seen below. Then Diamond stopped allowing Image enough space to do two-page solicitations for the first issues, and we didn't use any of it. Here's the image that became the cover for issue one, and Atom Eve's original costume. Actually most of the Teen Team is different in that picture below.



Rexplode



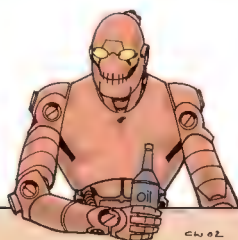
Atom Eve



Invincible



Dupli-Kate



(Robot)



PROPOSAL ART

It's a little known fact that Invincible was originally going to be called 'Bulletproof.' The name was changed because Image was publishing *Bulletproof Monk* and they thought it would conflict. Thank god for small miracles, huh? The first image below was going to be the cover of our proposal. This was the original Bulletproof costume. With the name changed, though... Cory and I wanted to somehow work in the letter 'I' to try and make the costume more iconic. Cory came up with the design that's used now and the proposal cover was changed at the last minute. And Yes, he was originally orange instead of blue, but the Bulletproof costume was yellow and blue... I guess we had it right the first time.





I wanted to see what the costume would look like with gray instead of orange... it wasn't one of my better ideas. There's a funny story about this family portrait. In Issue two of the Saint Michael mini-series I did with Terry Stevens, there's a panel where there's a Science Dog, SuperPatriot and Superman poster on the wall, along with a family portrait hanging in the hallway that looks just like this picture. Aside from Superman these are all books Cory and I have worked on together. The page was also drawn a full year before we knew anything about doing SuperPatriot or Invincible. Let's see if we somehow end up on Superman next...

SKETCHES

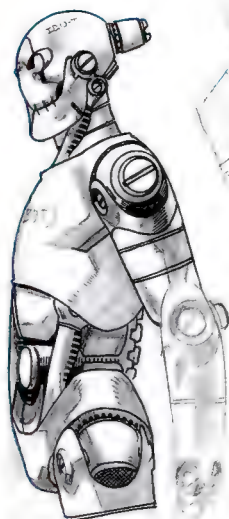
Below is the first ever drawing on Bulletproof/Invincible, as well as a couple other drawings from when he was called Bulletproof. Originally... Mark's powers were going to be solar power-based, and the disks were going to be designed by Robot to store solar energy in case of an emergency. Then he was going to have an invisible aura around him that altered the density of stuff to make him able to fly... and super strong... and stuff... but then I found out that's what Jay Faerber and Jamal Igle's guy, Venture did. Now... well... where's the fun if it's explained.



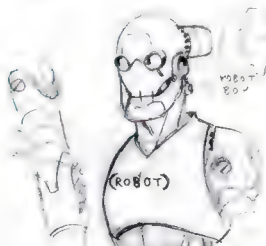
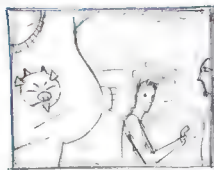
Below are some sketches by me, I'm sure you'll have no trouble picking them out. One was an attempt at putting an 'I' on the Bulletproof costume before Cory came up with the new design that we went with. Another little known fact is that when Invincible was called Bulletproof, Omni-Man was called Supra-Man. Image made us change it fearing that DC might not enjoy us using a name that when pronounced out loud is almost impossible to distinguish from their beloved trademark character. I really liked the undies that Supra-Man wore. When Cory remembered that Nolan came to earth in the '80s and wouldn't really have a classic looking costume, we scrapped this look and went with a more modern one.

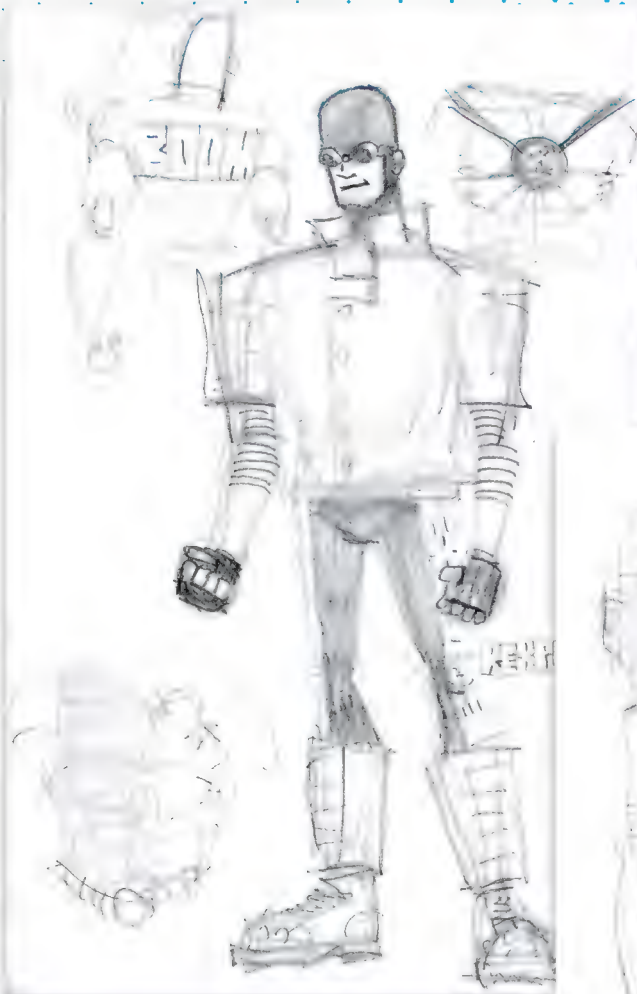


Here are some early designs for the Teen Team, and the first drawing of the more 'modern' costume for Supra-Man/Omni-Man. Robot was all Cory's idea... I really just came up with the know-it-all personality to go with the design. Cory also came up with the BRILLIANT name Atom Eve... but Rex Splode and Dupli-Kate are all me. Some people think the Teen Team's names are a little funky... I prefer to think of them as awesome.



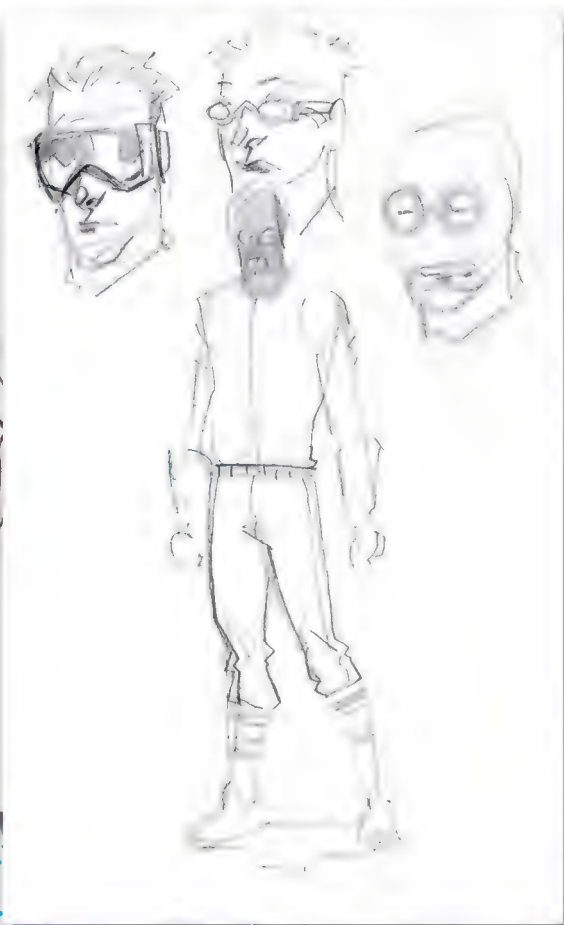
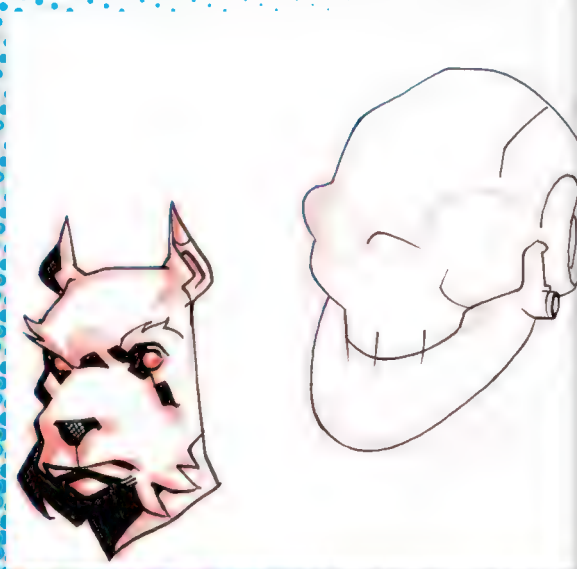
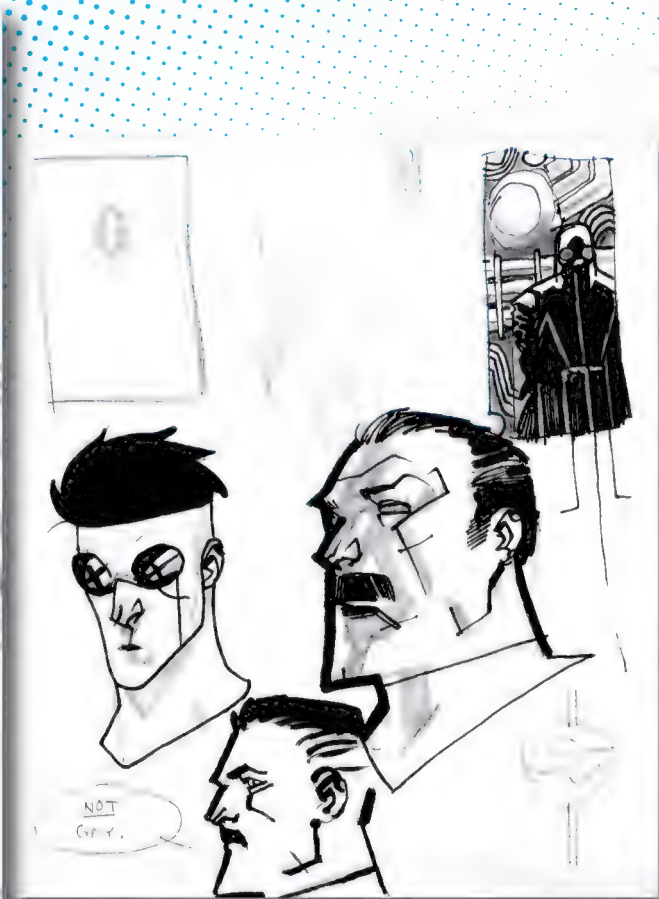
ROBOT BOY

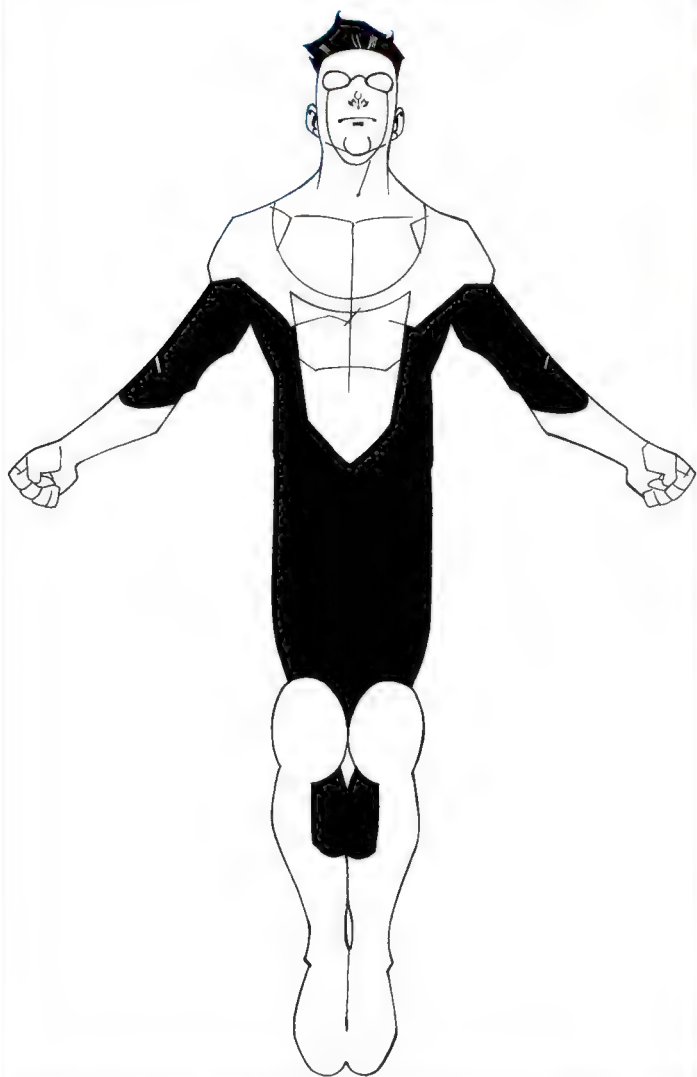




Here's my original design for Rex Splode and Cory's revision. Originally, his name was supposed to be printed on the side of his leg. I thought it might be a little too hard to draw all the time and to be honest... it might have been a bit to '90s. I think it looks better without it. Also on this page... Invincible with a knife in his shoulder. 'Invincible' indeed.



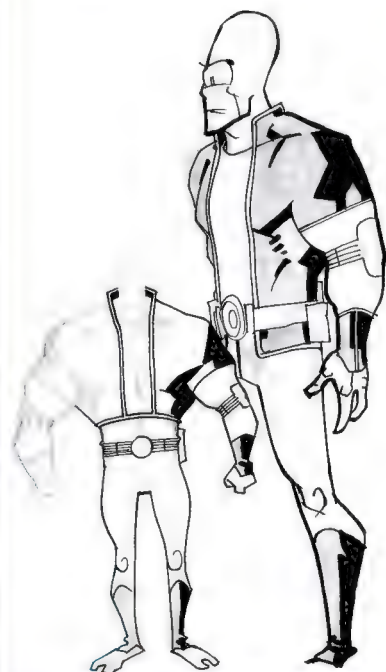


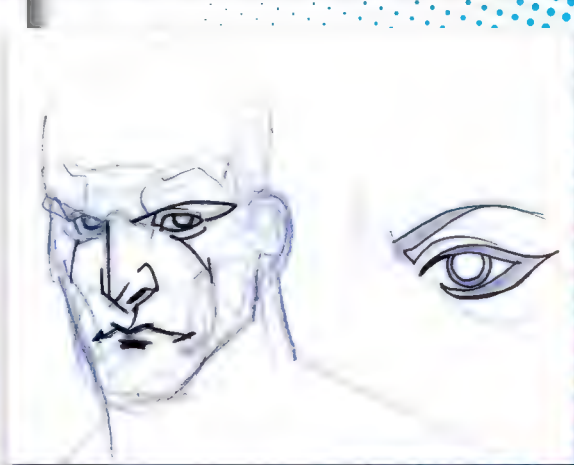


The two drawings on this page were done as part of jam pieces to promote the new Image Comics' super-hero line. The first was for the cover of *Previews*, and the second one was for the cover of the Westfield Comics' mail order catalogue.



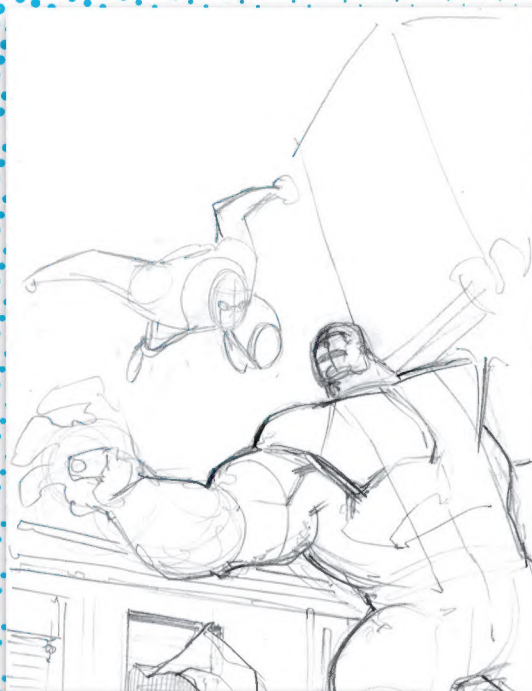
When it came time to work on Invincible issue two, featuring the first appearance of the Teen Team, Cory decided to make Eve's costume a bit sexier. I think it was a good move, it's a much better costume. It would be negligent of me if I didn't mention that the itty-bitty cape was my idea.

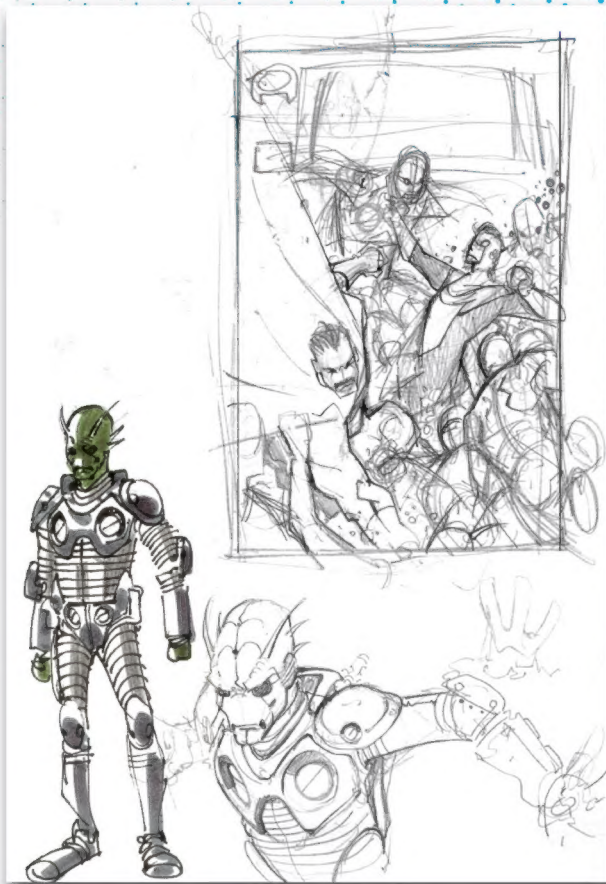




Also making his first appearance in issue two, in one measly panel, is Allen the Alien. His first full appearance is in issue five, but Cory had to get him nailed down while working on issue two.

On this page we see some designs for Mauler, as well as the supporting character William. When we started working on issue one I told Bill Crabtree that I'd try to get Cory to throw him in the book. I think that's always fun to do, and people seem to enjoy it. When I decided which character to make Bill, it was just one of Mark's friends from high school... no big deal. At the time I had forgotten that I had big plans for the guy... so now Bill Crabtree himself is a major supporting character in one of the books he colors.





Here we see some designs for the aliens in issue 3... still no name for those guys. Also seen here, the cover sketch for the cover of this very trade. It's based on a suggestion Kurt Busiek had for the cover of issue 2. He didn't seem too keen on most of the covers we did in this arc so I asked him to tell me what he would have done to try and get a feel for what he thought was a good cover. When he suggested this one I thought it would be perfect for the trade. Cory and Bill really hit this one out of the park... I just love how the cover for this book turned out.





SUPERHERO

Mark Grayson is just like most everyone else his age. He's a senior at a normal American high school. He has a crappy part time job after school and on weekends. He likes girls quite a bit, but doesn't quite understand them. He enjoys hanging out with his friends and sleeping late on Saturdays (at least until the good cartoons come on).

The only difference between Mark and everyone else is that his father is the most powerful superhero on the planet, and as of late, he seems to be inheriting his father's powers.



"...distinctive and clever and alive, all the while standing foursquare at the heart of a longstanding, well-worked genre that many would say has nothing more to offer."

Kurt Busiek--from his introduction.

Mark's first team-up

ISBN# 1-58240-320-1
INVINCIBLE, VOL. I: FAMILY MATTERS
IMAGECOMICS.COM

